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HUNGARIAN RHAPSODY

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The Portrait of an Actress

by

Bertita Harding

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To
JOSEPH HENRY JACKSON,
who uncovered this plot

FOREWORD

WHEN Camille Fehér de Vernet left the Hungarian stage after sixteen years of constantly mounting successes throughout the pre-war monarchy of Emperor Franz Joseph, the Budapest *Hirlap* wrote: "We have lost the most promising star on our theatrical horizon. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace the fire and laughter that were poured into each one of her flawless performances." Where did Camille go? What caused her inexplicable eclipse? *Hungarian Rhapsody* trails this glowing comet of the past into self-chosen oblivion.

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PART I

EUROPE

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Chapter 1

FABLE

A SHIFT of burrowing miners descended into the earth.

For years they had labored in the dark mountains of Slovakia that held the precious ores. They knew their trade, its wages, the foreman's name, but the pit in which they plied their shovels, and the surrounding workers' camp which they called home, remained nameless. The mine was known only by a number.

"We ought to find a name," said a young laborer, tossing his pick over a brawny shoulder.

"What for?" asked another, listless of mien. "We don't stay long enough in one hole to get used to it."

The eyes of the first man glistened. "The earth is rich here. I think we are going to stay. A town may grow up where you stand right now—we ought to find a name."

There was a wave of grumbled comment as fellow

workmen weighed the matter. "And have you thought of one?" they asked, almost in unison. "If so, out with it, that we may put up a shield, 'This is the fair city of ——' . . . Well, what is this the fair city of?"

The broad-checked, flaxen-haired youth reddened under their taunts and fumbled with the lantern in his hand. He hadn't really thought of any name. He had just been dreaming of neat houses in a row, of streets, a gilded church with onion-shaped spires, and a fine market place where now stood a line of hovels. He had just been dreaming.

But an old miner now spoke up. "The boy is right," he said, "and I will tell you how to choose a name. We're going down for the night shift; when we come up again, let the first word that is spoken be taken as a sign. By it we shall be known."

A roar of laughter met these words, but the old man's counsel was good-naturedly accepted. The bowels of the earth closed upon the men as they crept deeper into the shaft, while on the surface a smouldering bed of coals kept the kettle of *haluska* (the meaty Slovak *pot-au-feu*) gurgling under its dancing lid.

Work in the mines was hard; it lasted many hours. When at last the men returned, black and exhausted, no one remembered the joking agreement. Hungry stomachs brought only one thing to mind: the bubbling odorous *haluska*.

"*In' Topf schau!*" ("Look into the pot!") cried a Saxon apprentice, not yet at home in the local dialect. (He used the blurred soft consonants of the Bohemian border, so that the words sounded like *Dob schau.*) He raised the lid and sniffed the pungent vapors of meat stock, leek and little peppers.

At this a sudden recollection burst upon the others. "Look into the pot! *Dobschau, Dobschau!*" they echoed. "That shall be our name. So let our place be known."

Not only the name, but the chronicle of its choosing, would be recorded on an iron ingot and preserved in the archives of the community. The story, now almost three hundred years old, became legend; but Dobsina, as the city became Magyarized under centuries of Hungarian rule, continues to cherish the serio-comic fable of its origin.

Chapter 2

THE REMENYIK HOUSE

NEAR the market place of the town stood a great stone house built in the sixteenth century. Gothic in style, its walls were one and a half meters thick. Over the massive doorway could be seen the carved escutcheon of the noble clan of Remenyik. The building was the largest structure in the city, equipped with gigantic rooms which the hospitable owners periodically threw open to their fellow townsmen as a meeting hall and casino.

The house itself had endured many a storm. It had weathered repeated political uprisings, as well as the terrible conflagration of 1855 which left the town a heap of ashes. While people fled screaming through the streets, the Remenyik household had remained quietly anchored in a sea of flames—so safe were the thick walls and the

iron shutters which had been bolted quickly over doors and windows. Iron, the blessed ore of the region, had seen the family through.

During those days the venerable, time-scarred house belonged to Samuel Hus, a direct descendant of the reformer Jan Hus. Samuel had married for love and property; his wife was Baroness von Remenyik, as well as heiress to a family fortune which consisted largely of iron and copper mines. In accordance with the dowry laws of the period a woman's property was turned over to her husband at the time of marriage, a procedure which brightened life for bridegrooms.

But Samuel himself contributed more than romance to the union. He brought a keen intelligence and an exploring mind which soon trebled the family fortune. It happened in this way: for generations the mountains of Dobsina had offered up their wealth of iron ore, streaked with copper and nickel, but in addition to these valuable metals there also appeared a bluish-gray substance that exasperated the local workers. They trampled on it and swore with a lush profanity when a particularly dense vein of this alien composition coated the prized matrix rock. Church services had even been held, dedicated to the sole purpose of arguing with God and urging Him to free the precious ore from this nuisance.

It was Samuel Hus who, having studied at the distant metallurgical school at Leoben, one day discovered that

the hated compound was cobalt and that its value far exceeded the remaining output of the mines. He promptly ordered the opening of new shafts, doubling production capacity and pay rolls. Presently, as a flourishing trade with England developed and ore was shipped across the Channel in a steady stream, he found himself appointed technical director of the firm.

Blessings accrued. Slovakia was under Hapsburg rule, and Dobsina, growing rich, became the only self-sufficient community in the realm, where citizens did not have to pay local taxes. There were other civic benefits in which everyone shared: each household was supplied with free lumber for the duration of the winter, since forest lands extended round about and there was plenitude for all. No need for anyone to shiver, said the city fathers, when firewood grew faster than it could be cut. Thus, even the Remenyik household received annually forty wagonloads of aromatic fir logs to blaze from Michaelmas to Whitsuntide.

The Hus family was considered small. Given life's uncertainties, a son and two daughters did not quite ensure the continuity of either a name or a nation. Was not an only son too easily lost? And were not daughters destined to give continuity to whatever name they married, while their own stock might die out? Yet Samuel seemed satisfied with his small brood. He took great pride in his son and namesake, who attended the mining academy

at near-by Selmezbánya and later embarked upon a successful career at Oravica, on the Rumanian border. The two girls, Tilka and Vilma, also enjoyed what was then considered an exceptional education. Though travel was cumbersome and fraught with hazards, they attended a fashionable school in Budapest, where languages and music received particular attention. Music was their mother's consuming passion; the Baroness played with abandon, if not mastery—an accomplishment wherein she had no rival, inasmuch as she owned the only-piano-in-the-city. This piano enjoyed an odor of sanctity, for on two occasions it had been honored by no less an artist than Franz Liszt, who had come to call. Both times the great virtuoso's visit had been announced by letter, so that the instrument could be polished up and tuned in advance; the Baroness even brought out her best embroidered felt and satin runner (with a verse from *Fidelio*) to lay on the ivory keys. Liszt came and stayed the week end. With wild mane flying, he settled down before the only-piano-of-the-town and pounded till the rafters shook. The Baroness beamed. But when the illustrious man departed the tuner had to be called in again, for not a single string remained in key.

Of course, fortune could not smile on the Remenyik house forever. While inspecting a cave-in one day, Samuel contracted pneumonia and died within the week. Trouble comes in pairs. Tilka, the elder daughter, grew suddenly

lame and took to her bed. Her case baffled local and metropolitan physicians alike who, lacking modern X-ray facilities, were unable to make a proper diagnosis. Five bedfast years of suffering led finally to the deduction that during the bouncing stagecoach rides to school in Budapest the girl had dislocated her hip. Not having been reset in its socket, the leg had only gradually adjusted itself to a new position, boring a place into the bone tissue and bringing a fresh set of ligaments into painful play.

Tilka's ordeal proved no holiday for her mother and sister, since the patient required careful nursing and a maximum of attention. Everyone tiptoed around the sickroom, ready to heed the slightest call. Tilka knew this and she made the most of it, plaguing the household with innumerable tyrannies, until her whims bordered on the absurd. She would wake up at three o'clock in the morning, screaming:

"Hungry! Want pancakes!"

Whereat her sister Vilma (one could not call upon the servants at such an hour) hastened downstairs to build a fire and prepare the requested dish. More often than not, when it was ready, the petulant patient had dropped off to sleep again.

During the summer months Tilka was transported to the neighboring spas of Karlsbad, Franzensbad, Marienbad, as well as the curative resort of Szent Margit on the Danube isle of ~~the~~ name. These journeys were under-

taken at the slowest possible pace, with Vilma holding her sister in her arms so as to absorb the shock of crude and springless carriage wheels.

However, even these seemingly interminable rides came to an end. After years of misery and hopeless invalidism, the patient rallied and showed signs of recovery. The miracle was partly due to the fact that during a stay at Franzensbad Tilka had made the acquaintance of a sympathetic young man of Italian and German antecedents, whose name was Camillo Kauffmann. For his sake the self-willed invalid essayed walking again. Not only this. Since her sick leg had withered until it was five inches shorter, she put on an orthopedic shoe. Flounces and billowing petticoats happily concealed the deformity from curious eyes. As for Tilka's face, it was quite pretty, and her dowry most acceptable. Accordingly Camillo Kauffmann (his father had been a famous general) did not waver long; he took the girl's heart by storm and made her his bride.

After the wedding the pair moved to a country estate, sixty miles from Dobsina. Vilma remained alone with her mother, enjoying to the full this loneliness which meant release from tyranny. At last there was leisure again for music, needlework, long walks at dusk and an occasional book. These were the things that Vilma, the exact opposite of her sister in both character and taste, had missed. With passionate intensity she now gave

herself over to quietude and study, resuming her interrupted dream of a career on the concert stage.

But Fate interfered again. Within the year a young Budapest doctor, Ferdinand Fehér de Vernet, came to Dobsina in the hope of establishing a practice. He put out his shingle and set about calling on the town's leading families, including the Remenyik house where Vilma—in the absence of her mother—entertained him with a Chopin ballade.

Doctor Fehér was not musical, but he felt himself irresistibly drawn to the shy maid whose large romantic eyes lifted her plainness above the commonplace. He called again to listen to more Chopin and to watch the brown hair curling softly upward from the demure collar at the nape of her neck. In less than a month's time Vilma's artistic future faded into limbo as, forsaking her metronome for matrimony, she accepted the young physician's troth.

Ferdinand Fehér was poor. Born into the family of a prolific country squire, he had battled for his chance in the world. During his years of medical study and internship he had earned his tuition by giving private lessons at night. In addition, since there was a chronic need of money at home, he sold his father's rotating crops of beans, carrots and peas, as well as other produce from his native village. In this manner he had helped two brothers through the university, one to secure a professorship, the

other a degree in law. But the struggle had left its mark; due to continued overwork, young Doctor Fehér was troubled with a defective heart.

This did not dim the happiness of his nuptials; a radiant pair were joined under the strains of organ music in the small Byzantine cathedral. After the ceremony a wing of the Remenyik house was remodeled into a private clinic, with waiting and consulting rooms as well as a medical library. The shingle was suspended over the door, and the young couple—destined to give Hungary one of its best-loved actresses, Camille Fehér de Vernet—took up their life together.

Chapter 3

CHILDHOOD SCENES

CAMILLE'S appearance on earth had been badly timed.

A baby brother, born before her, had fallen ill of pneumonia when a year and a half old. A renowned colleague of Doctor Fehér had been summoned on the case, but the tiny spark of life went out even as the weeping mother entered her second labor. The new infant's first cry was mingled with the tears of a grieving household.

In the midst of such sorrow it was no wonder that the birth of a healthy girl child elicited no celebration. Nobody bothered much about the little package of kicking humanity that lay in its crib while another was borne away in a white box to the old churchyard downhill. Nobody, that is, but Uncle Camillo, who loved children and had come from his home in the country to serve as

the new baby's godfather. It was from him that she received her name.

"Had I not claimed you for my godchild during those days," he often said in later years, "you might not be alive. . . ."

The growing child marveled at this disclosure and thenceforth looked on Uncle Camillo as a supernatural being. Not so Aunt Tilka, who thought him a bit of a dunderhead. But Aunt Tilka was a stern lady, hard to please.

To be sure, after Doctor Fehér and his wife recovered from their first deep sorrow they began to look upon their daughter with different eyes. The baby had been flourishing under the care of a wet nurse from the provinces—a cheerful, bouncing creature who sang all day. Her name was Amma and her milk, it was said, nurtured sunny souls in all the children who imbibed it; but, alas, it also shaped their physical destiny. Amma was round and very short, and the babes she suckled seemed to inherit her silhouette. They went through life craning their necks and fighting obesity.

Another of Amma's characteristics was her articulateness. She was always talking when she was not singing. Due to her urge for self-expression, which was evidenced in constant chatter, her charges became precocious and learned to speak at an early age. When the little Camille was a year old, while out for an airing, she attracted the attention of a neighbor.

"And where are you going, Camillushka?" the lady asked, expecting no more than a toothless gurgle from the baby.

"For a walk to the *Sommergasse*," answered the tiny creature, perkily seated on her nurse's arm.

After this occurrence Amma was suspected of having added ventriloquism to her other talents. One thing was certain: the children she coached in premature speech had not the slightest inkling of the meaning of their outrageously adult vocabulary. Small Camille herself piped the sounds like a magpie charmed by its own noise.

As time went on the big words grew bigger but the baby's growth did not keep pace. On entering nursery school Camille was given a seat in the first row, with a miniature stool placed in front of it to keep her feet from dangling in mid-air. This footstool accompanied her through six elementary classes.

She did not shine among the other pupils—palpable evidence that precocity in speech can be deceptive, since it by no means denotes mental faculties of exceptional worth. The prodigy is not always, or necessarily, intelligent.

But Camille was a child to whom many things happened. One of her earliest experiences would always linger in her memory in capital letters that spelled "DIS-ASTER WITH INKWELL." It had occurred in the first grade where, incomprehensibly, the horrid black

fluid was introduced to pupils barely ready for crayons or a slate. Camille came home during recess one day with a shockingly big spot on the French ruching that circled her white batiste frock. Here was calamity indeed! The dress had come from Budapest and it was pleated with special irons. Would Mama scold? What to do? Well, Camille did not falter long. Schooled by Amma in self-reliance, she hit upon a way out of the dilemma. Armed with a pair of shears, she hid behind the sewing-room curtains and resolutely snipped the offending blot out of her skirt.

Another early incident was of a more private nature. On reaching the maternal stage, which with girls begins at approximately the age of three, Camille owned many doll children. She tended them with loving care, but with the passing of time they began to puzzle her. At last, when she was almost five, her bewilderment found concrete expression. Why, she inquired, did her dolls possess a doll house with furniture, kitchen, stove, dishes, cupboards, trunks and clothes—but no toilet? Since child's play was but a copy of life, she felt periodically impelled to send her dolls to the bathroom, only to be mortified by the lack of this necessary institution. No use to minimize the matter or skim over it by maintaining that Gaby, Olga, János and Marishka were made of sawdust and could dispense with functions which Camille herself, reared in a medical household, was being taught

to observe with ruthless discipline. Was not a hateful dose of castor oil the inevitable consequence of neglecting one's "duties"? Besides, in the course of convincing and realistic play, Camille sometimes purged her dolls, knowing that this (fortunately imaginary) process would "do them good." But the process likewise precipitated a crisis in her toy universe, so that she was compelled at last to take action and to remedy the lack. She would build her dolls a toilet. With carving knife, glue and an old cigar box she retired one afternoon behind the piano, where the apparatus was to be assembled. But in her creative *élan* she wielded the knife with a careless verve that all but severed the thumb of her left hand. Screaming with pain, she rushed from her improvised workshop into her father's operating room where a quick tourniquet was applied. The thumb was saved, but all further feats of plumbing were henceforth forbidden. As a concession to her not entirely illogical remonstrances a miniature chamber pot was obtained, which she considered an insult and an indignity to her dolls, since they were past the age for such infantile appurtenances. But with this laughable makeshift the grownups seemed to have summarily dismissed the problem.

For the rest, life in the Remenyik house was never dull. The family found work and amusement alternating happily, since Doctor Fehér was fast becoming the town's leading physician and a citizen of distinction. He served



Doctor Fehér de Vernet (Camille's father)

on various directorial boards, to wit: the bank, the church, the school and the cobalt mines that Grandfather Hus had launched on their way to prosperity.

Further joy came to the household when another child, a boy named Jenő, was born. This baby brother captured Camille's heart. He was a fascinating live doll, whose performance definitely surpassed the unsatisfactory Gaby, Olga, János and Marishka. Her sawdust children held but slight interest from this time on.

Doctor Fehér's practice had grown through the years until the family saw little of him; he seemed to be constantly abroad, either on foot or in his buggy, paying calls and answering emergency pleas. One of his most exacting patients was the grumpy old Count Manó Andrassy who, the peasants murmured, had been a rake and a petticoat chaser in his youth, whereas now he was a wicked miser. The baker boy claimed to have had a nasty experience which made the rounds of Dobsina. One day, while attending to his deliveries, he had crossed paths with the Count, who snarled:

"What do you want?"

"To sell my bread, Your Grace," the boy had humbly answered.

"Get out!" was the angry retort. "We bake our own."

"Mine makes good crumbs," the lad suggested apologetically, "for *Wienerschnitzel* and *Backhändel*."

But the ill-tempered lord chased him off the premises,

shouting, "Crumbs, bah! Enough are brushed from the tablecloth to fit our needs!"

Doctor Fehér cast doubt on this tale, putting it down as malicious gossip. His own discretion and genuine neighborliness put a voluntary ban upon his tongue so that he likewise never indulged in professional scandal-mongering. He abhorred contributing to the wreckage of broken homes or reputations, either by implicating silence or unsubstantiated testimony. By the same token he never reported the countless errands of mercy that took him to the town's poorer quarters, where people lacked money for medical aid. Innumerable times a tasty broth was cooked and bottled in the Remenyik kitchens, allegedly to sustain the doctor on his rounds; but since he packed it into a satchel already bulging with bundles of clothing, shoes and a quantity of superfluous medicines, everyone knew that he was bent on some philanthropic mission. Into the most wretched hut he went, tending the rag-tag sick on filthy beds of pain, where his predecessor—a proud medico from Prague—would not have crossed the threshold unless a gulden had been put on the table for the fee and all windows been thrown open to let out the stinking air.

"Poverty smells," the saying went. And nothing was more true. To high heaven it smelled.

But the pariahs loved their benefactor. In later years, long after her father's death, the grown Camille would

return home and find herself showered with kindness and devotion—due partly to her own fame—but in fullest extent to Doctor Fehér's measureless charity and self-sacrifice.

Though taken up with the duties of motherhood, Vilma had trained herself to assist her husband in the operating room. At times this called for no small degree of heroism. One night, while the children were still quite young, the doorbell rang and a man was brought in unconscious and covered with blood. He was an habitual sleepwalker who had jumped through a closed window; his body seemed a pincushion of glass which Vilma (Doctor Fehér was out on a call) quietly removed. Locked in the nursery during these proceedings, the children sobbed with terror, for they had seen the stream of blood that marked the patient's transit past their door.

On another occasion Uncle Aladár von Ruffinyi—a nephew of Grandmother Remenyik, whose sister had married into the wealthy Ruffinyi clan—returned from a hunting trip and in a moment of carelessness brushed the trigger of his gun, shooting himself through the wrist. He hurried to the nearest doctor, who proposed immediate amputation. Uncle Aladár would not hear of this; he stumbled out on the road again and gritted his teeth until he reached the Remenyik house. Here, by some miracle, Doctor Fehér was able to save the arm, although two fingers remained permanently crippled. The wound needed

daily dressing, so Aladár remained as house guest for the balance of that month. Since Camillushka's cowardly horror of blood had already been observed with disapproval by the family, it was deemed prudent and of disciplinary value to make her witness the changing of bandages. (Jenő was thought as yet too young for such enlightenment.) Each day the little girl was led to the surgery, where her eyes were to grow accustomed to life's realities by watching the comparatively innocuous removal of dressings and the application of new gauze. But the method proved worthless—she fainted dead away.

"Timid Jane" became her name thenceforth. She bore it in shame and in disgrace.

Chapter 4

THE ICE CAVE

THE BEST thing about Uncle Aladár was his brother Eugene.

This charming scion of a wealthy house (the Ruffinyi family would one day inherit the entire cobalt district of Dobsina) kept the province enthralled with his daring escapades. He was a great dancer, a mountain climber, a romanticist and a lover of sports.

As a small girl, Camille had made Uncle Eugene her hero, but he was destined to grow in stature and to become renowned beyond even her childish dreams. It came about through the most casual circumstance.

During a boar hunt in the Slovak hills Eugene had reached the lone Stratzen Pass when a prodigious thirst overcame him. Finding himself far from urban habitation, he sought out one of the timber-line hostels where

woodsmen rested and took their draughts of brandy.

The rustic tavern keeper and his wife set out a jug, and Eugene drank. The refreshing potion proved a stimulating *apéritif*; Eugene discovered, on quenching his thirst, that he was hungry as well. He ordered scrambled eggs.

"And might we add a piece of meat, a goulash or some *Königsberger Klops?*" asked the good woman before hurrying to her stove.

Eugene looked after her in blank amazement. "Meat!" he cried. "In this dry time of year? Where does one get meat that's fit to eat? How do you keep it from spoiling?"

"Oh," replied the tavern keeper's wife, "quite simply. Up in the forest there's a deep hole that's full of ice. We drop the meat in there and it stays fresh for months."

This was too much for Eugene. He lost interest in the order of scrambled eggs. Picking up his alpenstock he rushed outside and headed straight for the woods where, guided by the aroma of two newly cured hams, he soon came upon the extraordinary refrigerator plant. Behind some scraggly growth of brush, a gaping fissure emitted a blast of chill air. Plainly here was something that deserved closer investigation.

That night Eugene Ruffinyi sent a messenger to Dob-sina, ordering a dozen miners to report with picks, ropes and shovels. At dawn, as the men arrived, he put them to work, his own impatience causing him again and again

to take a hand in the excavation. Presently the hole was large enough to admit further exploration from within, whereupon Eugene volunteered to make the first descent. "Volunteered" might well be an understatement; he would have cracked the skull of anyone who beat him to it.

At the last moment an afterthought detained him. What, reflected the canny Eugene, if the discovery he had stumbled upon were to prove a geological phenomenon of incalculable worth? He would need official witnesses to validate his claims in the case and to offer creditable testimony before a county court. In short, no one but the mayor of Dobsina would do; he must have the mayor on the spot.

Another night went by while messengers fetched the worthy official and also Doctor Fehér, since Eugene had meanwhile decided that the adventure might involve some broken bones. On the third day everything was in readiness.

Clad in miner's garb, Eugene Ruffinyi stood on the rim of the ice hole. A rope seventy meters long was tied at one end about his waist, while the remaining length had been wound on a windlass operated by a wooden handle. In addition, he carried a lantern in one hand and in the other a ball of twine which was attached to a small bell on the surface (to be rung in case of danger).

With much hallooing and the exchange of conflicting

directions, warnings and prayers, the assembly lowered Uncle Eugene into the frozen cave.

"Dante," mused Doctor Fehér, "found Hell to be a glacial pit rather than a flaming cauldron. This may be his Inferno . . . !"

Awed silence greeted this reference, and there were those who shivered with a darkly metaphysical fear.

Eugene Ruffinyi had meanwhile disappeared below. He could be heard puffing and clambering about, when suddenly there came the muffled sound of a crash.

"Sapristi!" echoed Eugene's voice. "There goes my lantern!"

He had dropped the burning lamp which tumbled downward from level to level, creating an intermittent rumble. The length of the sound gave the first hint of the fabulous depth that had been tapped; the ice hole must be a prehistoric cavern of fantastic proportions.

Wide-eyed and panting, Eugene was pulled back to the surface. No use to go on in utter darkness. Besides, he now wanted a thousand meters of rope and a lantern that would fasten to his belt, so as to have a free hand for climbing. The adventure had assumed a more serious character.

Again the descent was essayed, this time with the most elaborate preparations, since everyone was by now aware of the grave hazards involved. Feeling his way about over loose rocks of ice and through slithering moist passages,

Eugene sought a foothold in the immeasurable labyrinth. He glided on his back down snowy surfaces and over gelid crags until his feet rested at last on a smooth and level plane. Now he moved forward instead of down into the frozen wonderland. The magic gleam of his lantern illumined gigantic walls of ice, with stalactites and stalagmites forming majestic colonnades through which he stepped in breathless awe. With beating heart he entered a tunnel only to emerge in a meadow of crystal blooms. Again the great glacial vaults swept upward into peaked Gothic cathedral domes or the twisted arabesques of a baroque shrine, wherein a thousand images had been sculptured by unseen hands. Whichever way his eye turned it was met by an infinity of gleaming, sparkling ice.

Fascinated, Eugene retraced his steps and tugged vigorously at the bell cord. Twenty minutes later he was drawn from the magic depths into the light of day. But sunbeams seemed to him no match for what he had just seen.

"Come with me, all of you!" he shouted. "It's magnificent!"

For the rest of that day—and many months to come—exploring parties descended into the cavern to sight, plumb and record its enormity. When all the facts were known they created an international sensation: here was the largest ice cavern in the world! Its total area measured

8,847 square meters (95,690 square feet). One of the innumerable "chambers," later to be designated as the "Court," was 360 feet long, 61 feet wide, with huge pilasters 40 feet high and 9 feet in diameter. In addition there were vast galleries of frozen allegorical shapes, as well as a variety of realistic formations suggesting a "Waterfall," "Curtain," "Lovers' Bower" and "Throne Room." One corridor leading to a "Rookery" extended 650 feet in length without a single imperfection of line, as though a channel of smoothly flowing water had been caught by a blast of polar air and blown into a giant tube.

The savants who came to study this antediluvian wonder were enchanted. Two professors, Dr. Alexander Kraemer and Dr. Johann Pellech of Budapest, prepared a treatise on the subject which, later reprinted in a brochure, was translated into several tongues.

The cave itself received the name of "Ruffinyi Cavern," and an engraved plate affixed to its entrance commemorated Eugene's discovery. The Emperor Franz Joseph summoned the young man to Vienna and decorated him for his exploit—though, as Eugene himself put it, medal and riband were undeserved, since he had merely ordered a plate of scrambled eggs and dropped his lantern for the distance of a mile.

"It was a borrowed lamp, too," he explained; "so I *had* to go down after it."

Chapter 5

THE EFFECTS OF PUBLICITY

“**R**UFFINYI CAVERN” changed the tempo of life in Dobsina. Within a fortnight the town had become a tourist center where travelers from near and far made their headquarters before an inspection tour of the marvelous cave. The Remenyik house, by virtue of its close ties with the Ruffinyi family, shared in the limelight. Journalists, geologists, photographers and promoters flocked to the scene, making demands or offering fantastic sums for exploitation rights to the caverns as a spa, a supernatural sideshow, or even a cabaret. One Parisian *entrepreneur* proposed to stock the ice chambers with live (steam-heated) mermaids for the delectation of onlookers wrapped in fur greatcoats that would be supplied by the management. Not only would such a project stimulate

the hotel business, but trappers and dealers in skins would profit by the increased trade.

However, neither the Ruffinyi brothers nor Doctor Fehér (who represented his mother-in-law, Baroness von Remenyik) saw things this way. After a quiet conclave with the assembled relatives, Eugene transferred his claims and explorer's rights to the authorities of Dobsina. The cavern became municipal property. In addition, since the city coffers suffered from occasional depletion, he undertook the establishment of safety devices, such as stairs, gangways, a proper entrance portal and (the year was 1873) elaborate pulleys for alarm signals and the hanging of Bengal lights.

Even after this drastic step the stream of callers at the Remenyik house did not cease. Many stayed overnight, since it was customary to offer bed and board to strangers, no matter what their errand, until the last guest room or spare sofa had been marshaled into use. This brought delightful confusion into the children's lives, upsetting as it did their strict nursery routine. Camille and Jenő were both too small to understand the strange migration that swept over the town, but, whatever had provoked it, it provided excitement and release from supervision. For one thing, the children no longer sat with grownups during meal time, but were served at a tiny "cat table" in the pantry, where rules of etiquette could be forgotten. Blissfully they dipped crullers into

hot chocolate and engaged in lively chatter while stuffing their cheeks to capacity. The adult world around them was too engrossed in geological matters to watch a small girl and her infant brother making piglets of themselves.

But "Ruffnyi Cavern" did not remain an unmitigated joy, at least so far as the family were concerned. A few months after its discovery a distant cousin, Zoltan Polgár, who was postmaster of the town of Iglo—and an amateur stamp collector—arrived for a visit. That is, Doctor Fehér brought him for observation because Cousin Zoltan had suffered a nervous breakdown. It was hoped that a change of scene and a release from the monotony of counting postage stamps might cure the unhappy relative.

Cousin Zoltan, however, had been at his job and his hobby far too long; no matter where he looked, he saw pigeonholes with letters, post cards and more stamps. His fingers always felt gummy. Even his food tasted of mucilage. He grew sad and moody, spending long days staring into space and speaking to no one, so that the servants became frightened of him. Then, one day, he walked away. A searching party followed his tracks which led straight to the ice caves; on a glassy ledge, deep in the bowels of the earth, they found Cousin Zoltan sitting quietly, frozen to death.

His wife, Aunt "Litzi" as the children called her, grieved for a while and wore heavy mourning. But presently she ran for postmistress of Iglo and took over the

job of dealing out the stamps that had driven her husband insane.

It was at this juncture that an epidemic of Malta fever broke out in Dobsina, presumably brought on by the wave of swarming sight-seers. As a safety measure Doctor Fehér and his wife decided to remove the children to the country. Aunt Tilka was communicated with and on the same day Uncle Camillo arrived in his gig. A wicker basket crammed with clothes and toys preceded Jenő and Camille into the crowded vehicle, while squeals of delight marked the happy journey. A day's drive over dusty roads brought them to the farm.

Having as yet no children of her own, Aunt Tilka was scarcely demonstrative, though she had other ways of showing thoughtfulness toward her sister's brood. Her home was literally a place where milk and honey flowed; with prize cows in the pasture and a row of beehives on the premises the daily diet never changed. Cakes, pastries, cookies, nougats and every other variety of honeyed confection towered on the shelves, to be consumed in quantities that would have made Malta fever a trivial peril indeed. Within a week of overindulgence Camille and Jenő were doubled up with stomach-ache; they lay in bed, pasty-faced and ill with life's first cruel disillusion—the discovery that sweets can be too sweet.

Autumn and Christmas passed, and the children were not called home. On a cold January afternoon—snow-

with icicles—the sound of sleighbells echoed down the road. In another moment the knocker sounded and Aunt Tilka drew back the latch of the front door. Wrapped in heavy furs, her sister Vilma stood on the threshold.

Screaming with joy the children rushed toward her, clutched the snow-speckled skirts and, in accordance with Hungarian custom, kissed their mother's hand and cheek. But presently they looked into her eyes, red-rimmed and hollow, where they could read no happiness. An unspeakable sadness seemed to have clouded the familiar smiling face.

The sisters vanished into a sitting room, closing the door behind them. A sigh, a sob, the knowledge that something dreadful had happened—this was all that the children were able to guess. They had not, happily, reached an age to be taken into grown-up confidence.

That same evening a bolt of black cloth was fetched from the store. Patterns were spread out on the dining-room table, and a seamstress cut into the goods. Mourning dresses were fashioned for Mama, Aunt Tilka, Camille and little Jenö, while Uncle Camillo received a crêpe tie and a black band for the sleeve of his coat. Poignantly, at last, the children sensed the truth. They knew that Papa was dead. He had done his part, fighting the spreading epidemic and overtaking his strength until, at the end of a sleepless night, his heart stopped beating.

The plague in Dobsina was under control; but the townspeople had lost the man who conquered it.

Chapter 6

CAMILLUSHKA'S DOLLS

LIFE was different after this.

The country holiday had ended, and Vilma took her children back to town. She faced the task of readjusting a complicated household which had been keyed exclusively to her husband's medical interests. The laboratory and operating rooms were closed, and books, instruments and other professional paraphernalia were placed at the disposal of the county hospital. An additional portion of Doctor Fehér's vast library was offered for sale, but the only interested purchaser happened to be a local paper mill looking for pulp. Rather than see her husband's prized volumes degraded in this fashion, the widow ordered them packed into huge boxes and stored in the attic under the eaves, where they became a prey to the combined action of mould and rodents.

For the rest, it took a long time before the Remenyik house grew used to its new routine. Vilma wandered about the halls and corridors with a lost and disconsolate look, while the children knew hushed hours of lonely waiting for the attention that had formerly been theirs. But the duties of motherhood reasserted themselves and Vilma gradually found solace in the care of her little ones, whose training and education demanded her time. Jenö was a lively infant, full of mischief, while small Camille had grown into a dimpled doll.

"What makes you so chubby, Camillushka?" the neighbor lady asked.

"Whipped cream," she answered.

At the age of eight Camille's histrionic gifts first revealed themselves. She wrapped herself in the tassel-bordered plush cloth off the dining-room table and marched through the house in the rôle of old Barbarossa, whose legendary exploits she had only recently reviewed in school. Other characters out of nursery fairy tales came to life as she strutted and enacted scenes from *Ali Baba*, *Cinderella* and *The Snow Queen*. Children of the neighborhood soon took part in these activities, although Camillushka reserved for herself the privilege of writing all the lines and playing a leading part, most often that of a princess wearing a coronet and a gown with the longest possible train. Grandmother Remenyik's best shawl was turned to this regal use; it swept the floor throughout

interminable rehearsals during which Queen Camillushka scaled the boxes that formed a dais for her improvised throne.

These games were marked by an extraordinary realism. Camille believed intensely in everything she did, spurred on as she was by a most vivid imagination. She loved beauty, both in herself and others. Her own blue eyes and golden brown locks became the objects of repeated scrutiny as the embryonic actress preened before every available mirror in the house. In addition, Camillushka was creative. She devised countless embellishments in her own wardrobe and that of her theatrical "colleagues," never resting until each small detail approached perfection. Thus her normal playtime equaled a solid day's work, undertaken with incredible vitality and zest. Withal, Camille was the gayest person in the house, a fact which mystified her mother no end. Neither Vilma nor Tilka could ever have qualified as a ray of sunshine, nor was Grandmother Remenyik a giddy sort. Whence did the child inherit such a portion of jollity and good spirits?

"Old Samuel Hus," nodded the wise folk of Dobsina, "he was a card! And that granddaughter of his, she's got the Hus fires burning within her. . . ."

The townspeople and villagers were right. As childhood waned, and throughout the long years that were to follow, Camille's resemblance to her jaunty and buoyant

grandsire increased. Merry as a thrush, she seemed destined to sing and dance her way through life.

Up to the time of Doctor Fehér's death, in 1877, the family had known no financial distress. Four times a year the superintendent of the mines came to call and Baroness von Remenyik received him in the front parlor. While she sat at her embroidery table he placed before her the account of the last quarterly earnings together with a brief case containing a packet of crisp one-hundred-gulden bills. Without much ado the funds were placed in an old coffer, and a feeling of security settled over the house. Grandfather Hus's discovery of cobalt in the ores of Dobsina had vouchsafed a permanent tithe to his descendants. Permanent, that is, as long as the cobalt lasted.

Of late, however, the ore seemed to be growing paler. Now and then a whole wagonload of diggings showed an unwelcome earthy gray coloring and had to be discarded. The British firms that had so enthusiastically demanded increased shipments began to carp over the quality of material sent; quite visibly the cobalt content was diminishing and, analysts predicted, soon there would be none at all.

Added to this bad news came rumors from Germany that chemical experimentation had led to the discovery of synthetic pigments from which any desired dye could be produced. As soon as manufacturers abroad got wind of such information the Dobsina miners would face bank-

ruptcy, since the profitable English contracts would not be renewed. A certain amount of iron, as well as a thirty per cent nickel content, would remain their sole means of survival, which, in view of low market prices, spelled a mere pittance as compared with their former bounty.

But neither Grandmother Remenyik nor Vilma and the children foresaw the impending calamity. Every three months a superintendent came with money for the coffer; the fact that the sums he brought grew smaller with each visit made them suspect dishonesty rather than an intrinsic decline in their fortune. Widows and orphans must expect shady manipulations on the part of their administrators; it was a small evil which, provided it did not go too far, could be overlooked with an indulgent eye.

Besides, an extraordinary event suddenly befell Dobsina, blotting out all minor interests. Archduchess Stephanie of Austria, wife of the heir to the throne, had announced her impending arrival for an inspection of the Ruffinyi Cave. The Remenyik house, being the most suitable in the city, must be put in readiness for the exalted guest and her entourage.

Vilma plunged into a fever of activity. Curtains were cleaned, windows polished, rugs beaten and hung out to air in sunshine and breeze. The parlor furniture was divested of its gray slip covers so that the blue satin upholstery and the border of French velvet came to light. Flowers were placed in all the vases and a garland

wreathed the door where a great placard proclaimed in giant letters: "*Isten hozott!*" ("Welcome!")

For the children the festive event was breathtaking indeed. Small Camillushka and her brother hovered about, round-eyed and excited. The impending arrival of a flesh-and-blood princess evoked blurred memories of fairy-tale characters from the pages of Grimm, Hauff and Andersen. Stephanie became a composite picture of the Ice Queen wearing Cinderella's slipper and riding in a coach drawn by the noble steed Fallada.

Reality was a trifle disenchanting. The Archduchess with her small eyes and her long Belgian nose could hardly be called beautiful. She wore the pinched spinsterish look of unloved wives whose cheeks are pallid, not with anemia but with boredom. However, a great elegance of dress, supplied by French designers, offset such natural deficiencies and made of the tall and slender Crown Princess a figure of regal distinction. Her Gallic *politesse* further enhanced a studied but effective graciousness of manner.

As the exalted guests sat in the parlor, and a tray of superannuated Tokay made the rounds, Camille stood behind a closed door and peered shamelessly through the keyhole. Her heart was beating violently as with fierce concentration her eye made certain of the exact seat occupied by the Archduchess. A moment later, while the royal company departed for the three-hour ride to the

cave, Camille tiptoed into the hushed room. In reverent awe she paused before the armchair which had been honored by the imperial bustle; no one must ever occupy this piece of furniture again! Obeying an ecstatic impulse the child tore the silk hair ribbon from her brown locks and tied it lovingly to the chair, marking it thus as an heirloom. Hereafter, when visitors came, there would be gasps and exclamations as the rarity—which had enjoyed an intimate dynastic contact—was shown. Camille would be both curator and guard to the museum piece.

Alas, its sanctity was soon defiled by thoughtless and very inferior mortals. After the royal party had set out for Ruffinyi Cavern, several members of the reception committee returned to plead with Baroness von Remenyik for use of her furniture in the small pavilion at the entrance to the cave. Without hesitation this permission was granted, whereupon the entire parlor suite of sofa, love seats, ottomans and chairs came to rest atop a haywagon which tore over the highway at a great pace in order to overtake the archducal caravan. By the time Stephanie reached the pavilion, where hot tea and fur coats were held in readiness by the management, the blue satin chairs waited neatly in a row. Camille and Jenő, who had accompanied the furniture, hovered near by and watched the proceedings, particularly with reference to the beribboned armchair. To their consternation the identifying bow had not rendered the "heirloom" invio-



Interior of the Ruffinyi Ice Caverns

late; without the slightest compunction the fat burgo-master of Dobsina deposited his ample stern upon it.

The day's remaining adventures were dimmed by this outrage. So devastating was the children's anger that no further attraction interested them. The thirty-minute climb up the serpentine path that led to Ruffinyi Cavern held none of its anticipated delight, due to the dark thoughts that coursed through Camillushka's brain. Five-year-old Jenö, only vaguely conscious that the burgo-master had sat on something he should not have sat on, strove to share his sister's wrath. He scowled beside her while the royal party descended into the cave for the two-hour inspection of its wonders. When Stephanie emerged, some time later, the two children still sat hand-in-hand before the gatekeeper's lodge. Her Imperial Highness stooped down and kissed their round apple cheeks.

This made up in large measure for the day's earlier disappointment. At bedtime that night the awed Amma, who had witnessed the gracious royal gesture, laid aside washcloth and soap. She tucked her charges into bed without pausing for customary ablutions.

"I don't know," she mused perplexedly, "as I'd ever wash my face again if it had happened to me. . . ."

At this Camille and Jenö perked up hopeful ears. To be kissed by a story-book princess was good enough, but to abstain thereafter from daily scrubbing of hands,

neck and cheeks was perfect. Or would have been, if Amma's reverence for royalty had endured. As it was, the kindly martinet promptly forgot the incident and, beginning the very next morning, vigorously enforced the regular nursery routine.

The archducal visit had been marked by another event of considerable magnitude—the arrival of Aunt Tilka. At the first rumor of the planned royal excursion this lady had packed her bags and put on her best bonnet; Aunt Tilka was not one to miss anything. She reached the Remenyik house just in time to clutter the doorway with her baggage and to disconcert the Viennese retinue with her screams.

"My room," she demanded in emphatic tones, "I insist on having my own room!"

Since the chamber in question had been assigned to a lady-in-waiting, Vilma urged her sister to share quarters with the family in the crowded mansard wing, but there was no appeasing Tilka. She stormed through the hall threatening to establish her rights by force. It was only now that Baroness von Remenyik put her rebellious daughter in her place. Dropping the patient indulgence with which she had once borne the invalid girl's tyrannies, Grandmother Remenyik took a sudden stand.

"If you behave like a country bumpkin, Tilka," she said quietly, "I'm afraid we must ask you to go back to your farm."

At this the astonished Tilka gave way to an access of snuffles while, crestfallen and with deflated ego, she retired to the only corner that could be assigned to her. For the duration of the imperial visit she slept on a sofa outside the linen room.

With this episode a long-lasting spell had finally been broken. Never again would the Remenyik household tremble before the domination of a willful elder daughter; the cantakerous Tilka had been definitely forced to abdicate. She had her revenge, however. Never again would Vilma's children bask in the milk-and-honey abundance of their Uncle Camillo's farm. Let them go elsewhere on their summer holiday, while the unhappy Camillo yearned for their voices and the busy patter of small feet. Let them stay with their Aunt Litzi, the postmistress at Iglo, whose husband had not been able to cope with his stamps. Aunt Tilka laughed quite heartily at the thought of poor Litzi receiving visitors and making a cheap goulash for them on her spirit lamp. . . .

Chapter 7

FIRST TASTE OF APPLAUSE

IT HAPPENED the very next year that Camillushka and Jenö did go to Iglo, not for a holiday but because of their mother's sudden illness.

For some time Vilma had complained of throat pains, aggravated abruptly by a stricture of the larynx. An immediate cure in a specialist's sanatorium at Gleichenberg, Styria, was prescribed. Since Grandmother Remenyik was too old to be saddled with full responsibility for the children, Aunt Litzi was appealed to. By return mail this good soul opened her tiny home and correspondingly vast heart to the little ones.

The Iglo visit was wonderful. Each day the children accompanied Aunt Litzi to her post office where with ink pad and rubber stamp they marked the outgoing mail. Next, they went shopping with her in the sunny market

place, where Slovak peasant wenches in their bright-hued costumes were free in handing out candied fruits and other strange tidbits. Even cooking on the spirit lamp was fun.

For two enchanting weeks this blissful life went on and then Jenö took sick. He was stricken with a high fever, accompanied by nausea, violent attacks of vomiting and recurrent spasms. A small-town doctor hastened to the scene but he was unable to make a diagnosis. Messages were sent to Dobsina, and two recognized child specialists started for Iglo with the next stage, but they arrived too late. In less than twenty-four hours the boy was dead.

During that same night, in faraway Styria, Vilma had tossed restlessly on her bed. Awakening before dawn, she had rung for a servant and ordered her breakfast.

"I've had a bad dream, Emmi," she said. "Something is wrong with my son."

While she dressed, a telegram arrived, stating that Jenö was ill. (He had already died.) Within the hour she was on her way, demanding to be kept informed by telegraph in each town along the route. Faithfully the distraught Aunt Litzi composed one deceptive message after another until at last Vilma arrived, two hours before the funeral.

An autopsy revealed that a cherry stone, lodged in the child's appendix, had caused the catastrophe. This discovery served at least to absolve the kindly postmistress of Iglo of all blame. Neither the market trips nor her own

informal cookery could be made responsible for the mishap. Jenő could have swallowed his cherries whole, both in Dobsina and at Gleichenberg under his mother's own watchful eye.

For Vilma the blow was profound and crushing. Through the years she had mourned her husband with undiminished grief, but there had been the ineffable solace of seeing his children grow one day to maturity. There was a son to carry on his father's honored name.

This dream had ended.

"The name," Vilma wailed disconsolately, "even his name will be forgotten."

Eight-year-old Camille stood beside her mother, puzzled and bewildered. Did she not have the same name as Jenő? And had it not been given her by Papa?

Amma explained. Little girls grew up and married, whereupon they lost their names and acquired new ones. Camillushka would do the same; she would give up all but the part Uncle Camillo had bestowed upon her.

"I won't," the child exclaimed suddenly. "I'll keep the part that Mama is crying about. I'll always be Camille Fehér de Vernet!"

At this the old nurse shook her head uncomprehendingly, but Vilma stared into her daughter's eyes. Clutching the child in her arms she cried:

"Promise me that! Promise you will never drop your father's name!"

Round-eyed and solemn, the little girl held her breath. In a frightened whisper she gave her pledge.

A lesson accrued to Camille's benefit during the dreadful weeks that followed. In a household where sorrow had come to stay she observed that heartbreak knew of but a single outlet: work. The Remenyik women, bereft of their menfolk, turned to hard, relentless, never-ending toil for their surcease.

First they transformed the idle mansion with its rambling gardens into a productive estate. Grandfather Hus had always wanted to keep livestock on his premises; he had built a cow barn, chicken coop and stable beside the carriage mews. Every self-respecting family of the period did its own milking at home and looked to its own hens for the needed supply of eggs. But Vilma and the Baroness now took up production on a large scale. Having four cows and a brace of goats on their hands they ventured into the intricate industry of cheese-making. Storing great vats of milk in the pantry, they churned butter and processed the famous yoghurt. Dobsina lay only a short distance away from the town of Liptau, where Hungary's best cheese came from; it must be possible to rival that famed product right in the Remenyik kitchens. It was only after some experimentation that the amateur cheese-makers realized their mistake: the Liptau specialty was a result of certain climatic peculiarities of the region. The town itself lay nestled in mountainous country where

temperatures were harsh and cattle did not range over the hills. This resulted in a noticeable lack of fertilizer, to be remedied only by suborning whole flocks of sheep whose woolly coats made highland life endurable. After a season's sojourn on the barren heights the bleating herds descended, leaving their dung behind them. But the shepherds likewise had something to show for the long months of isolation. Milking their animals, they evolved a process for turning out a rich, herb-flavored cheese that would find its way to gourmandizing experts of the world. In addition, the whey of sheep's milk became known as an important aid in curing advanced tuberculosis.

Now and then Grandmother Remenyik ordered the killing of a pig. On such occasions the household was beset by a frenzy of activity. A sausage-maker came to aid Katrin, the cook, in the preparation of fine *Cervelat*, *Schwartemagen*, and *Bratwurst*. Great hams were salted and hung up to smoke, and bacon, ears and knuckles received the treatment appropriate to each. A large copy-book in Vilma's handwriting preserved the ancient recipes employed during these operations.

With winter over, the busy ladies branched out still further. Many years back Grandfather Hus had purchased a plot of ground on the edge of the town, beyond the brewery. A gregarious soul, he had planted and transformed this useless patch into a playground for his family

and friends. Dance parties had been held under an enormous pavilion, while farther down, in a sheltered dell, an open-air oven served as a picnic kitchen. Here a mechanical contrivance had been installed, affectionately called the *Csopperraedel*. The *Csopperraedel* was a wheel moved by water power from a near-by brook; from its center a long spike ran directly over the hearth, so that a roast of venison or a suckling pig might rotate uninterruptedly above the glowing coals. In olden days many a roistering feast had been held in this bucolic setting. The brook ran down its course, the *Csopperraedel* turned, the meat went round and round, while on the dance floor merry couples whirled on a whirling earth. Now and then Grandfather Hus took a long brush, such as is used by an artist at his easel. He dipped the brush into a porringer of salt water and periodically stroked the roast with this moisture so as to make the skin crackle with crispness.

Grandmother Remenyik now hoped to transform this somewhat frivolous retreat into a flowering orchard from which to bolster the small family earnings, as well as her favorite charities. The orphanage of St. Lucia, lacking its usual stipend from the no longer affluent Baroness, might well appreciate some fruit. Luckily there were trees aplenty: cherries, plums, apples and pears grew in luscious profusion. Only peaches and apricots refused to ripen in the cool Slovak air.

At first the regeneration of Grandfather Hus's picnic

ground proceeded in orderly fashion. The season had been mild and the branches hung low with their burden; it looked like a fine harvest. Already Vilma was able to compute in advance the profit to be derived from early sales.

But presently something unexpected happened. The town of Dobsina awakened to the realization that Grandfather Hus's walled-in paradise had come to life again. Workmen had been seen clearing the paths and burning up dry leaves and refuse. Even the dance pavilion had been swept (Vilma had laid out a plan for its use as a temporary storehouse for the plucked fruit). "Could it be," the hopeful townspeople asked one another, "that we shall go there and make merry as we used to do?"

They began calling, in small groups at first, later in larger numbers, on Baroness von Remenyik to compliment her on her courage and enterprise. Sniffing the good odors that issued from the smokehouse where Katrin nursed the newly cured hams, they waxed positively eloquent. What splendid plans must be afoot with all this preparation!

Taken aback, the Remenyik ladies had not the heart to admit their discreetly mercenary intent. Instead, they threw open the gates of the old picnic ground and let the crowds pour in. Gone was all thought of business enterprise at sight of merry burghers reclaiming their one-time outing place. Tossing economies to the wind, Grand-

mother Remenyik explored her cellar and contributed its best morsels to the feast; braised lung in butter sauce; pigs' feet pickled in onion, vinegar and brine; smoked duckling; potted goose; cakes, puddings, home-baked bread. . . . Three times a week huge baskets with plates, serviettes and cutlery were carried to the Hus gardens when, during Whitsuntide, the townspeople persisted in dancing the clock around.

In turn, the Remenyik family grew beloved in the community so that, if evil times should ever threaten, there could not be cause for serious worry. Everyone helped to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries at the great house. On Grandmother Remenyik's Saint's Day an endless procession of visitors filed through the front portals to offer warm congratulations. Many brought edible gifts, thereby obliging a tactful hostess to ask them to remain for dinner. Redolent cedar chests would be opened and vast tablecloths hurriedly made their appearance on improvised tables seating thirty-six persons each; yet when the visitors had set down their numerous offerings there was not an inch of the fine damask linen to be seen. Again the Lucullan abundance baffled description: tarts and strudel, candied fruits, imported oranges (at twenty *Kreuzer* apiece), whipped cream, cheese cake and a Turkish coffee of such delectable bouquet that over a span of sixty years Camillushka's memory would still inhale it. . . .

Over all these family functions there presided an old

retainer and factotum, the housemaid Suse. This combination nurse-cook-and-serving-girl had been in the Remenyik employ for at least a quarter of a century. She was a fiend for work. Her phenomenal activity allowed her no time to sit down for her own meals, though she invariably fed all those around her until they were stuffed to capacity. There were those who swore that Suse must have wings, so darting were her movements; no sooner did she descend the cellar stairs than, even before the kitchen door had slowly fallen shut, her upturned nose with its enterprising nostrils emerged again. She swept through the house like a witch's broom.

Suse loved children. The fact that Camillushka had been put on a starchless, milkless and sugarless diet (following the overdose of honey at Aunt Tilka's farm) distressed the faithful servant no end. She sputtered angrily against that "modern" Doctor Kruschen, who preached that a whole calf, roasted on a spit, was not so fattening as one small cube of sugar. "Fiddlesticks!" said Suse, and behind the medico's back her anarchist spirit plotted dark schemes. Whenever her good heart could bear the ache no longer of seeing the child denied her fill of sweets, Suse winked through the kitchen window and passed out delicacies. These were consumed with relish and a palpitating heart by Camillushka who, in turn, rewarded Suse with her unreserved adoration.

Meanwhile both Vilma and her mother marveled at the

persisting roundness of the little girl. They could not understand how the strictest adherence to Doctor Kru-schen's orders still failed to register a change in weight. If matters continued this way one must manage a trip to Karlsbad for a drastic cure. Already Camillushka's cheeks had the contours of a young lady's; on a recent train journey the child's head had appeared at the compartment window and been spied by an adventurous gentleman who, bribing the conductor, had himself and baggage transferred to the same car, only to be enormously chagrined on discovering that the dimpled face belonged to a ten-year-old lassie with equally dimpled knees and no bosom.

For the rest, when she was not worrying over her daughter's weight, Vilma took an enthusiastic hand in her education. She was herself of a gifted and inspired nature, ruled by the warm impulse of her musical genius. Her days began with music. Seated at the piano, Vilma allowed her fingers to drift over the keys in a series of improvised chords which, though listeners begged for their repetition, she could never quite duplicate. To the accompaniment of melodic phrasing Camille was made to recite long reams of poetry. At an early age she thus became familiar with the grave measures of Hungary's epic bards: Arany János, von Petöfi, Tompa Mihály and numerous others.

Another social grace that received Vilma's punctilious

attention was correspondence. Letters were to her the mainspring of literature. As soon as Camillushka was old enough to hold a pen her mother saw to it that she wrote notes periodically to every uncle and aunt in the family catalogue. "I hate uncles and aunts," the child eventually sobbed; "I wish I had no relatives at all!" But Vilma did not relent. There would be no afternoon tea and no play-time in the garden before the obligatory missive had been penned. . . . In later years this early discipline proved itself a welcome boon. The natural ease acquired by constant training made all personal correspondence a pleasure. "An idle moment in the day's busy schedule? Whom do I owe a letter?" the grown-up (and long thereafter the aging) Camille would ask herself. In a jiffy she would be at her writing desk and a few moments later the finished epistle fluttered gaily into the nearest mailbox. This joyous ability to reach out through pen and paper would one day be a bulwark against loneliness and grief.

The poetic recitals were put to use on every possible private and civic occasion. In particular was Camillushka in demand when, on recurring visits, international celebrities inspected the ice caves. A gala event of this sort was the arrival of a committee from the French Academy, headed by Ferdinand de Lesseps, François Coppé, Léo Delibes and the operatic sensation, Massenet. For this event a special eulogy must be devised, so as to make the exalted guests welcome in their own tongue. Almost

six weeks were spent in constant drill, until the small Camille at last was letter perfect. Lest any slip occur, Vilma made it a practice during all this time to speak to the children only in Gallic accents. When Camillushka complained that fear was making her heart leap to her throat, Vilma corrected: "*Palpitation de cœur*—it is nothing!" At last the important day arrived. The guests came via Budapest, accompanied by leading Hungarian academicians, journalists, and the better-known luminaries of the music and theater world. In the midst of all the turmoil stood a white-dressed little girl struggling with a vast bouquet and an even more burdensome attack of continued *palpitation de cœur*.

Surprisingly, the event went off with extraordinary éclat. Not only did the poem go without a hitch, but the French guests were completely bewitched by "*La Petite*" who had recited it so well. In chorus they demanded that she be their mascot for the day—a frolicsome development which the earnest Vilma had not foreseen. Camille, however, enjoyed herself immensely as a true Parisian gaiety broke loose and threatened to upset the well-laid program. As though suddenly bored with academic decorum, the visitors stormed souvenir shops en route to the Ruffnyi Grotto and purchased everything in sight: embroidered Slovak belts, Magyar kerchiefs, wild-looking shepherds' hats and Csikos boots. All these gaudy appurtenances they naturally insisted upon wearing, so that

the expedition soon took on the appearance of a carnival rather than a gathering of reputable scientists.

On reaching the grotto, where attendants waited with the customary assortment of fur coats, the party stopped for a double round of brandy. This led to such a delicious sensation of internal warmth that the entire deputation loudly chorused its refusal to don the proffered wraps. Attired in their motley purchases, the happy Frenchmen meandered into the frozen depths whence presently their voices re-echoed in a crescendo of "*magnifique*," "*superbe*" and "*grandieux*," to the utter demoralization of the cave attendants who were certain that the cream of France's intellectual crop would perish of lobar pneumonia. When, instead, the explorers emerged some hours later with beads of perspiration atop their bald heads, pious Dobsina folk made three signs of the cross as a safeguard against satanic meddling.

The rest of the day finished on an equally hilarious note. A banquet table burdened with native dishes held the general attention until dusk. Speeches were made and toasts drunk in never-ending succession, while Camillushka sat now on Massenet's lap, now on the knee of the famed choreographer Delibes. For the child, though she was unaware of the distinction of the company in which she found herself, the occasion would remain unforgettable. It was her first taste—and in the Parisian fashion, to boot—of public adulation. She had had her first real audience and a sip of that intoxicating drug, applause.

Chapter 8

THE AUNTS

THAT memorable day at Ruffinyi Cave put its cachet on Camille's life. Never again would she be satisfied with prosaic obscurity. Her flair for the footlights had been awakened and nothing would put it back to sleep. Her childish fancy fixed first upon the career of "poetess," though Monsieur Delibes' conversation about his ballet and Massenet's references to opera made her waver between dancing and singing as highly desirable alternatives. Vilma, a profound admirer of the drama, did not discourage her small daughter's growing histrionic urge, but there were acrid mutterings in the family circle.

Several aunts, who otherwise contributed little to Camille's well-being, showed alarmed concern. One was Aunt Paula, a leader in local society, who felt her prestige endangered by anything that savored of the *déclassé*. The

child's public recital in honor of the French visitors belonged in this category; Aunt Paula could not get over it, just as she could not get over the time when the first railroad track was laid through Dobsina and the train schedule was not altered to permit Aunt Paula to finish her morning toilet. That she had missed the train remained a scorching blot on her escutcheon.

Aunt Clari was another conscientious objector. Though extremely wealthy, Clari was the miserly aunt in the family. While traveling abroad she never patronized the dining car; instead, she sat in her compartment nibbling furtively at the cold chicken which she carried in her bulging reticule. If a passing steward opened her door to announce that meals were being served in the car ahead Aunt Clari rewarded him with a devastating glare. "Young man," she snapped, "I am a simple woman." Which, in the end, was perhaps quite true. As for Camille's theatrical leanings, Aunt Clari objected on economic grounds. "Comedians are notoriously spendthrift," she declared, while tying her purse strings into a secure knot.

But it was Aunt Margot, a devoutly religious spinster, who caviled at the moral issues involved. If Vilma wished to surrender her child to the Devil, the stage door was the most direct passage.

"As yet," protested Vilma, "my little girl wants to be only a poet!"

Margot, the bigot, raised a warning finger. Poets were known to make pacts with Beëlzebub. Witness that evil Doctor Faust. Let Camille beware. . . . Far better for the child to be instructed in piety and the domestic virtues of cookery and dressmaking; a sock well darned was worth a trochee any day. (The humble art of darning, Vilma reflected, would on the other hand conflict with Aunt Paula's exacting social standards. It was indeed difficult to please everyone!)

In the end the matter of Camille's education was settled at home. Grandmother Remenyik decided that the village life of Dobsina created narrow horizons and that her granddaughter ought to attend school in a larger city. The finest "institutes" were urged to send their catalogues for inspection, and each prospectus—from Budapest, Miskolcz, Kaschau, etc.—was studied with the greatest care. After thorough consideration it was the Private Seminary of Frau Caroline von Bukovich, in Kaschau, which met the family requirements, not only because of its artistic leanings but due to the circumstance that Kaschau was only a short distance away. Thus Camillushka, who would be sorely missed at home, could be fetched for the week ends and holidays without undue expense. In addition, Frau von Bukovich was partial to pupils of feudal background and allowed them a substantial reduction in tuition fees, a benefit to which the Remenyik ladies promptly laid claim.

The school lay in the midst of a small park with a well-kept lawn called, after the French fashion of the period, *Le Glacis*. There was an abundance of fresh air, though a high stone wall surrounded it. The pupils, only a few in number, were not permitted outside the heavy gates.

Camillushka soon became friendly with her fellow students. There were several little girls who, due to proximity in age, made up her immediate circle: two countesses, Matilde and Serena Dezsöffy; Baroness Fövenyessy; a dark creature named Kornisch; a wealthy "pork-princess," Kuczik Erzsi, from Hungary's famous stock and packing town of Debreczin. Apart from the boarders many day pupils attended classes, and two visiting professors appeared now and then to supplement the female teaching staff. Frau von Bukovich herself presided in aloof splendor over two intimidated helpers, Mademoiselle Pauline and Fräulein Cecilie Deisinger.

Fräulein Cecilie, a sallow-faced spinster with red hair, supervised the children's study periods, their table manners and bedtime ablutions. For these unpalatable duties, strictly performed, she was bitterly rewarded, since the youngsters made her the butt of innumerable diabolical pranks. Now Fräulein Cecilie's cherished (and detachable) topknot disappeared; then there was a wet sponge tucked into the toe of her Sunday boot. Again the harassed pedagogue would be unable to appear at breakfast since her dental plate had been pilfered by a fiendish

hand. Yet so intimate was the nature of her petty martyrdom that Fräulein Cecilie could not bring herself to make a public denunciation of her tormentors, for such an act would automatically have exposed the piteous artifices with which she was obliged to bolster her fading charms.

The scholastic program was well rounded, with special emphasis on languages and music. In addition, three times a week, there were special dancing lessons under the renowned ballet master, Monsieur Kinsky, from the Opera. These lessons took place in the dormitory, the largest available space in the school. Beds, chairs and night tables invariably had to be cleared away and crammed into the attic while the great dancer performed his pirouettes. After the choreographic exercises Monsieur Kinsky departed and the furnishings were hurriedly brought down again. In winter, with snow drifting through the attic crannies, the pillows, sheets and coverlets were often frozen and the children, overheated from the dance (these ballet lessons always took place after evening vespers), thawed out the clammy bedding with their own steaming bodies. The ordeal was excruciating, but they suffered it in silence. In a body, they were entranced and thoroughly enraptured by the Byronic dancing professor. Before the end of the school term the little Kornisch and the Dezsöffy countesses paid for this rapture with almost fatal attacks of pleurisy, while Camillushka arrived home

shortly after Christmas with a mysterious sciatic ailment that paralyzed her limbs.

Promptly the three Norns, Aunt Paula, Aunt Clari and Aunt Margot, gathered in solemn conclave to shake grim heads. Here was the punishment for exposing an innocent child to Thespian wiles. Poor Camillushka would no doubt remain a cripple, victimized by her own mother's irresponsible leaning toward artistic antics. Doctor Kruschen, the family physician, added a woeful note; unable to remedy the trouble, he summarily declared that it must be hereditary. Had not Aunt Tilka spent years in a wheel chair? The young Camille no doubt would do the same. It did not occur to the old medico that in the present ailment no dislocated hip bone was involved, and that the neglect of a widespread inflammation of the sciatic nerve might well lead to the very state of invalidism which he already considered permanent, though at the moment it must have been easily curable.

Vilma was frantic. Lacking the means for an expensive consultation with foreign specialists, she went to every practitioner for miles around. The result was always the same. People had heard of Aunt Tilka and they found it prudent to agree with Doctor Kruschen's verdict. The child would never walk again.

At this Grandmother Remenyik put on her bonnet and shawl. She paid a visit to the home of her Ruffinyi kin and spoke a few well-chosen words. When she had finished

Uncle Eugene wiped the tears from his eyes and joined Grandmother Remenyik on the next train for Dobsina. At Camillushka's bedside he promised that, if money could work wonders, a miracle would be wrought—even if it took every last ounce of gold from the Ruffinyi mines, and the Ice Cavern to boot.

A round of consultations now began, nineteen in all. First there was the journey to the curative spa of Pöstyén, Slovakia, in the beautiful valley of the Waag, where mineral baths of strong radium content had long brought relief to sufferers from rheumatism and gout. The Carpathian Museum was stocked with splints and crutches left behind by joyous patients who had no further need of such badges of misery. But Pöstyén held no elixir for the unfortunate Camille. Daily the child was transported from her bed to the pool in a riksha-like contraption. The ailing limbs were dipped into the hot bubbling mud (which often enough occasioned painful blisters), while in the near-by esplanade a band blared forth popular music. Holding the attendant's hand and stifling many a sob, Camillushka listened bravely to the strains of Offenbach and Weber. But the ordeal was useless. Six weeks later Vilma was advised to take her daughter to the thermal baths of Mehadia (Herkules Bad) in the Banat. After this followed Trencsin-Töplitz, Ajnácskő, Balaton-Füröd, Tátralomnitz and, lastly, the strange resort of Balaton-Hévíz. This last-named spa, located in the Zalaer Komitat

and belonging to the popular vacation spots around Lake Balaton, was characterized by an extraordinary natural phenomenon. Its thermal pools were crystal clear on the surface, with a solid bed of radio-active slime at the bottom. Patients waded or were carried to the deep portion, where they could be immersed for hours in the black mud, yet on emerging (the water was nowhere more than two feet in depth) they were rinsed completely clean. This was a decided advantage over most thermal pools from which former white members of the human race issued as blackamoors, to undergo a nauseous cleansing process in the privacy of their own tubs.

Due to the strength of its waters, and their ideal convenience, Héviz continues to be regarded as the panacea for all physical ills. Particularly do people visit it after the Christmas holidays in order to do penance for the December curse of overeating; in many cases the trip alone, over rock-strewn and almost impassable roads, is deemed a cure. In Camille's childhood overfed and dyspeptic mortals, tossed mercilessly about in a horse-drawn gig, were known to arrive at the *Kurhaus* with such a sense of well-being that they turned right about and went back home. Just the bouncing and jouncing were worth the fee.

After three years of every manner of treatment, the now adolescent Camille returned to Dobsina, still ailing and lame. Her legs were bent backward at the knees and

refused to straighten, while her hips had stiffened to such a degree that kneeling or lying down were the only possible positions for her to assume. Even so, her spirit was intensely alive. The girl once so giddy and joyous longed for mental stimulus and occupation.

It was decided that her education should be continued. Private tutors were engaged and a well-rounded study plan was laid out. Since Camillushka begged not to be left in bed, a cushioned desk and stool (fashioned like a *prie-dieu*) was built for her. Kneeling, she attended lessons and caught up with the learning she had missed.

During this time a detachment of Hungarian troops was quartered at Dobsina. In keeping with the traditional Magyar veneration for horseflesh, a gruff veterinary from the Puszta accompanied the outfit. This regimental appendage called one day at the Remenyik house and asked to see the little girl who hadn't walked for more than forty moons.

The baffled Vilma admitted the stranger to the sick-room. He studied the twisted joints and with his toughened fingers began a slow and vigorous massage. It was a very painful process, but something about the trooper's arduous intensity seemed to transmit itself to the suffering girl, so that she held quite still until the muscles turned blue.

He came back the next day, with salves and lotions, and another dose of the terrible massage. Besides this, he or-

dered salt-water baths taken nightly. In a week's time the cramped joints relaxed and the knees began to move. Within the month Camille was able to sit up for an hour a day, swinging her legs from a tall chair.

"Now you can go back to Pöstyen," said the horse doctor, "and take the fancy cure that rich folks do. It won't hurt you, I guess."

Hypnotized by the simple man's curative gifts, they took even his sarcasm for current coin. Trunks were packed and Vilma bundled her daughter off to Pöstyen where the warm sunshine and invigorating air put a finishing touch to Camille's recovery.

It also brought a change into the pattern of Remenyik House. For, at the Slovak health resort, Vilma became enmeshed in a sinister fate.

She married again.

Chapter 9

POLISH HONEYMOON

THE Polish Baron Anthony de Lászlo was a hunter and sportsman of great daring. That was why he had a broken leg. He had come to Pöstyen in search of quick repairs so that he could get back to his riding. Meanwhile, during the long weeks required for his tibia to mend, he lay in the sun and wrote *Polska* poetry or devised musical texts for Heinrich Heine's more nostalgic rhymes.

His balcony adjoined that of the Remenyik ladies and, since daily meetings became unavoidable, nods and greetings were soon exchanged. Camille had been allowed to take up piano lessons once again. Her practice hour gave the bored nobleman next door a logical pretext for opening up conversational avenues. He evinced a lively interest in the young girl's talent and offered a few points of technical advice.

Vilma was delighted by the stranger's interest. She countered with a long recital of her child's sufferings and of the miraculous recovery that lay now within reach. Her face was radiant with happiness, and the unhorsed Pole found in it a new thrill. As long as he could not follow Diana's bow and arrow, he toyed with Cupid's. He listened patiently to the history of Camillushka's futile pilgrimages from one spa to another, but all the time his dark eyes gazed through languorous lashes at the soft oval of Vilma's cheek.

There is a well-known Hungarian saying, "Flirt with the mother, but marry the daughter!" In the present case the saying was reversed. Baron de László pretended a strenuous absorption not only in Camille's therapeutic progress but in her pianoforte accomplishments as well. He discussed moor baths, pelvic flections and the proper reading of a Czerny sonatina, the latter with conspicuous—not to say scrupulous—attention to tempo and adequate fingering.

Somewhere in the course of these uplifting discussions Vilma's slender white hand came to rest in his own aristocratic palm, and the subject changed with that abruptness already established by Dante in a classic precedent—the Malatesta tryst. Of Paolo and Francesca, meeting in the garden over a book of verse, the Florentine bard had said: "They read no more that day. . . ." Just so, Vilma and her Slav suitor were done with therapy and the well-tempered clavichord forever.

They married quickly, and matters changed in the Remenyik household at Dobsina. While Vilma departed with her husband, first on a Viennese honeymoon and then to the mortgaged baronial estates in Poland, Camille was supplied with a French governess, Madame Gabrielle Renaud, and sent on a visit to her uncle Samuel Hus at Oravica near the Rumanian border. Though this visit was intended to be brief (merely for the conventional duration of her mother's honeymoon) Camillushka remained in the uncle's house for more than a year. With the beginning of his courtship, Baron de László's interest in music had ceased and he made no bones about wishing to keep chromatic scales and metronomes well out of ear-shot. Besides, Vilma's fecundity soon promised him a child of his own, so he could ignore the unwanted step-daughter altogether.

Camille did not mind. She enjoyed the southern clime of Wallachia and the Banat, where honeysuckle wound a perfumed web about the houses and filled the air with its bewitching scent. The people round about spoke mostly Rumanian, an ancient Latin tongue, tinged with a variety of Balkan dialects. Their tireless industry was proverbial. Hands were never idle; if not at work in town or field, they carved, carpentered, embroidered or spun. Daily a certain peasant woman passed Camille's window on her two-hour way to market where she sold a special type of cucumber grown in her patch of yard. As she walked, a basket with a four-month-old baby was balanced precari-

ously on her head, while from her shoulders hung the heavy sack of gourds. At the same time her left arm was linked about a portable spindle and a supply of flax which with her right hand she twisted steadily into a well-spun thread. . . . Once arrived at the market place, the woman spread out a clean cloth on the ground and laid her cucumbers in a neat row. Next, with the baby in her lap, she unfolded an unfinished piece of embroidery that would decorate her husband's Sunday trousers, and sewed away the hours while waiting for a customer. (The spinning could be continued mechanically, and without painstaking care required for colored stitches, on the way home.) . . . The cucumbers sold at approximately one penny a dozen, since they were very small and used only for pickling. Often the day's profit amounted to no more than forty or fifty *kreuzer*, but the peasant woman trudged away with beaming red cheeks and an assured smile. There had been no waste. She had gossiped with her fellow hucksters, passed the time of day, added several yards of thread to her spool, given the infant an airing and fashioned another motif on her mate's holiday garment. That a few cucumbers had been sold in addition to all this was sheer opulence! She would hurry home and stir the stew that had simmered on the hearth all day—white beans with onions and sow belly—and there would be a feast.

Fully as interesting as the peasants of the region were

the gypsies who haunted this corner of the world. Daily some straggling caravan of Romanies passed the Hus house, shouting wild Asiatic curses or wailing some incomprehensible and melancholy song. At times they camped in a near-by field, either to hold a burial service or to baptize some new-born infant. On one occasion Camille crept stealthily to the edge of the encampment and watched a gypsy wedding in progress. She witnessed the gaudily bespangled bride and her flower-decked groom standing before the leader of the tribe, who spoke the troth:

“Swear that you will leave each other, as soon as you discover that your love has died.”

What an apotheosis of freedom! That man and woman would remain together while passion was alive went without saying; no need to make a covenant for such a certainty. What mattered was that wedlock must not turn into a hideous captivity, destroying mankind's greatest possession—liberty of body and soul.

All gypsy traditions rested on this fundamental basis. Tiny infants were bathed in the Danube and laid on the cold bank to dry, while time-worn aphorisms were spoken over them: “Fear not the water; it is thy brother! Love the earth; it is thy friend!” Like the wild horses of the Mongolian steppes, the wandering people could endure no shackle or bit. On his golden jubilee Emperor Franz

Joseph erected a commodious village for the straggling Romanies, whither they were led after a gigantic roundup. But buildings with doors that snapped shut in the night, hiding the stars and every sound of woodland life, proved unacceptable. Out of politeness, so as not to offend the Emperor (who, poor fellow, was himself a captive and did not know any better!) the gypsy folk entered the houses; but, once inside, they set up their tents in every room, blotting the stone ceilings from sight. After a few days of this nonsense they had enough of it and, leaving a sack of herbs, a piece of bread and a pinch of salt as token of their gratitude, they climbed into their covered wagons and sped away. Not for them the Western man's delusion of independence while he sits snugly enmeshed in the rigid pattern of urban and suburban taboos. Nature was still stronger than man, and only they had dignity and pride who recognized this fact. . . .

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Chapter 10

FRANZ LISZT

DURING that year at Oravica Camille's schooling was sadly neglected. She lived a carefree outdoor existence, basking in the gentle sun and equally gentle mountain air, so that her health and strength were noticeably improved.

It was Grandmother Remenyik who in warning letters to her son brought up the matter of the girl's educational needs. It was high time, she wrote, for Camille to continue her musical studies, preferably at the Nemzeti Zenede Conservatory in Budapest. Uncle Samuel concurred. He made immediate contact with a family friend, Professor d'Arányi de Hunyadvár (whose wife was a sister of the violin virtuoso, Joseph Joachim). The Professor, a very old man, had no connection with music other than this marital bond; he was an honorary member of the

medical faculty at the University of Budapest, where Camille's own father had attended his classes. Due to this fact the young girl was now welcomed into the d'Arányi home.

There were four grown children in the professorial household. One of them—Hortense—had long been celebrated for her beauty. In French, *hortensia* is a horticultural term for a well-known flower, the hydrangea. Once, while delivering a surgical dissertation, Professor d'Arányi called upon a student to describe the appearance and size of the human brain. The young man, an exchange student from Paris, could think of no comparison. He simply stood there with a dreamy look on his face.

The Professor tried to be helpful. "Does *hortensia* mean something to you?" he prompted with his best Gallic inflection.

At this the lad blushed a deep crimson. "Ah, yes, Monsieur," he exclaimed, "I adore her!"

In the d'Arányi home, from the threshold of which Camille walked to her classes at the Conservatory each day, the immortal Liszt once again crossed her path. Coming from London or Paris, he invariably visited Joachim in Berlin and then stopped to call on Joachim's sister in the Danube capital. Many small supper parties were held. After lively conversational harangues (Liszt, like Wagner, was a great talker) there would be long hours of musical improvisation, during which the master

played composition upon composition that had not yet—and may, indeed, never have—appeared in print. While seated at the keyboard, Liszt invariably showed his famous profile to the audience; this was a daring breach of tradition, since before his time a pianist either faced the public or turned his back upon it. Feminine admirers sighed over the great man's *nez d'ivoire*, but enemies of the Liszt school of bravura called the nasal promontory a beak and referred to the master as the "itinerant profile."

Whatever its shape, Liszt's was a good nose for publicity, and the great man knew the value of originality in advertising. Once, while billed for two concerts in a French town, Liszt found himself on the first evening playing before scarcely fifty listeners, of whom but one was a woman. Always a lion with the gentler sex, he was deeply hurt. He stopped in the middle of his concert and marched to the footlights. "Gentlemen—and Madame," he said, "this is enough of music. Will you do me the honor of dining with me?" The invitation was accepted with loud huzzahs, and the assembled audience—with the lone lady seated on the host's right—enjoyed a banquet at Liszt's expense. The town gazette published the story and on the next evening the concert hall was sold out, so that the wily Franz felt himself more than reimbursed for his outlay of the previous night. The second audience, however, went supperless to bed, discovering to its chagrin that free meals did not always come with piano recitals.

During his visit at the d'Arányi home Liszt was accompanied by a favorite pupil in whose talent he professed an enormous interest, so that he deemed it wrong to deny her the benefit of his tutorship while on tour. The young lady, Elsa Sonntag by name, practiced daily on a silent keyboard (brought along for this purpose) in his room. Mama Sonntag, who traveled with her daughter, was wary of this noiseless contraption. Had it not been common knowledge through the years that of the maestro's 180 feminine pupils approximately one-third were chronically infatuated with him? Besides this, there was the record of his recognized and acknowledged mistresses, which reads like the *Almanach de Gotha* punctuated by the more romantic names of art and literature. Alternating with the Princess Wittgenstein, the Comtesse d'Agoult, Bettina von Arnim and Princess Rospigliosi were George Sand, Lola M6ntez and Marguerite Gautier (Dumas' real-life heroine of *La Dame aux Cam6lias*). Nor were aging grandames immune to the Hungarian's prodigious charm; the wizened Madame Plater wrote, "If I could be young and pretty once again, I should take Chopin for husband, Ferdinand Hiller for friend, and Liszt for lover. . . ."

Well, there would be no nonsense about Elsa. Mama Sonntag presided over the practice hour and supervised the painful finger-stretching exercises that formed the basis of Liszt's pyrotechnics (the maestro himself spanned

twelve keys with ease). For the rest, if Elsa's heart fluttered in time with her rapid scales, no one would ever know it.

For young Camillushka this brief interlude in the presence of genius proved tremendously inspiring. Never in her life had she seen a more genuine stage presence than Liszt's; he was a born showman, with a perfect sense of timing and of drama. He strode across the concert platform with the step of a conqueror. Tearing white gloves from his hands, he seated himself at the piano, holding his profile pensively aloft. He then ran his spider-like fingers through the mop of hair covering his classic head, poised himself, and attacked the instrument with the vigor of a commanding general. His phenomenal playing electrified audiences everywhere until it was unanimously conceded that no other personality except Paganini had made a more astounding impact upon the musical world. On witnessing the autocratic grandeur of a Liszt performance, Chopin rushed backstage and shook his colleague's hand, murmuring: "I personally always dread playing in public; it unnerves me. But you, if audiences are difficult to charm, simply overwhelm and crush them!"

Liszt's birthday happened to fall into the period of his d'Arányi visit. Plans were made for a fitting celebration. At the Conservatory, where Camille made rapid progress with her singing lessons, a vocal chorus rehearsed daily for the great event. As the crowning number of the eve-

ning the cantata *Mater Dei Alma, Aqua Semper* had been chosen, with Camille singing the solo part. A mixed chorus of forty-five voices was to be lined up behind her on the podium.

On the eve of the performance a dress rehearsal took place, during which every last note was polished to its finest nuance. Three hours of feverish work left teacher and pupils tired, overheated, but exultant and in breathless anticipation of the next day. Joyfully Camille ran from the school and with several companions boarded a street car to attend a small gathering at the home of a fellow student. During the party the youngsters chatted loudly and devoured vast quantities of frozen mocha dessert, with the result that by morning most of them came down with laryngitis. Since only the teacher was in voice, the cantata fell ignominiously by the wayside, while half the town's throat specialists made the rounds from bedside to bedside, ordering six weeks of silence.

This minor catastrophe left Camille completely without voice and put a damper on her operatic ambitions.

Chapter 11

VILMA'S RETURN

SHE continued at the Conservatory, concentrating on the literature and drama course. But presently another misfortune broke in upon her studies. Bad news came from Poland.

Within the year of her marriage Vilma had given birth to a boy, named Anthony, but this touching event in no way helped the deplorable state of her marriage. Baron de Lászlo had returned to his first love, the great outdoors. He rode and hunted incessantly, neglecting wife, home and property, so that the estates fell into ruin and Vilma was once more living on her brother Samuel's purse. She never saw her husband, whom only another broken leg would hold at home. As a result the unhappy woman decided to bundle up her newborn infant and to return with bag and baggage to Dobsina.

Once she was settled again in the Remenyik house, the longing for Camillushka, whom Vilma had sorely missed, became intensified. There was nothing for it but the girl must come at once from Budapest. Since this desire coincided with her "silent" period, during which no singing lessons were possible, Camille left school and hastened home.

The reunion in Dobsina, at first touchingly happy, was soon clouded by Grandmother Remenyik's failing health. The old lady was past seventy and she had spent a lonely year. Even though she had held her head proudly throughout the time of Vilma's Polish "exile," she never ceased worrying over this favorite daughter's *mésalliance*. Now that the lamentable episode had terminated—and was being assiduously forgotten—Susanna Remenyik's composure relaxed and she seemed to give way to the debility of age. During the early winter she caught cold and died, within a fortnight, of double pneumonia.

What remained of the Remenyik fortune was now divided equally by her heirs, a circumstance which renewed the lost ties with good Uncle Camillo and his wife, the difficult Aunt Tilka. They had prospered in life. Forsaking the placid existence of a gentleman landholder whose fields were parceled out to tenant farmers, Camillo had risen to the post of superintendent over a string of mines from the High Tatra mountains down to Agram in Croatia, and his income now was lordly. The addition of

the Remenyik inheritance served merely to bloat the money bags over which Aunt Tilka watched with a fond eye.

Prosperity had left its mark on this lady's exterior. Where formerly her wardrobe was characterized by a provincial neatness and decorum, Tilka now sent to Vienna and Paris for her clothes. She wore frilly peignoirs and boudoir caps that formed a startling frame for her long hatchet face while she reposed grandly in bed sipping her morning coffee. At afternoon gossiping parties she eclipsed every lady of her acquaintance with the dazzling array of finery which she assembled. Her parasols, her lace mittens and above all her cartwheel hats, richly wound with ostrich plumes, flower beds and vegetable patches, were the talk of the province. In short, the wealthy Madame Camillo Kauffmann had become a fashion plate.

There was only one fly to mar Aunt Tilka's otherwise agreeable ointment. It pertained to her husband's new mode of life. In the interest of business Camillo was forced to travel a great deal, particularly in the Agram region, where there were no hotels and he must accept the hospitality of native burghers. Now there is a strange and picturesque tradition prevalent in Croation lands, whereby a guest must be given full use of the house and of his host's wife as well. Aunt Tilka did not like this. She particularly did not like the alacrity and dispatch with which Uncle Camillo attended to the Agram mines, while his

enthusiasm seemed to flag when his itinerary took him in the opposite direction toward less friendly Slovene sectors.

Her bitterness found refuge in almost forgotten sisterly love. Tilka returned to Vilma's arms and during a brief sojourn in Dobsina helped the sorrowing relatives in the mapping out of a new life. For the second time Vilma decided to make the Remenyik properties pay. This time, aided by the experienced Tilka's advice, she succeeded in reviving the orchard so that it produced raspberries, cherries, gooseberries, grapes, cranberries and innumerable other fruits. The vegetable garden, too, was put in order so that it gave a seasonal crop of cabbages, beans and an especially delicious Slovak mushroom called *Kurtchetka*. The prized *Riziki* (another fungus type suitable for pickling) was likewise planted in profusion, while the citizenry of Dobsina—speculating on a revival of the ancient picnics—looked on with unabashed delight.

"One must live like self-respecting gentry," Tilka informed her sister, taking command over everyone within sight. What she meant was that people of pride could pass muster only if they were both self-supporting and self-producing.

After putting house and garden in order she looked up at the Remenyik hills that, as she put it, cried for sheep dung. Shepherds were hired once more, to pasture their flocks in two-month shifts, always making sure that the

ewes furnished milk for the coveted Liptauer cheese. Small crocks of this delicacy were stored in the cellar for use during lean winter months.

At last, when all was done, Aunt Tilka departed. In her wake the faithful Suse once more swung the kitchen scepter.

In the busy life that now ensued at Dobsina the growing Camille readily found her place. Her gift for recitation received new impetus when a young poet, Dóczy József, of Debreczin, presented her in a series of literary evenings. She declaimed his ballads and, at the age of fifteen, gave way to a lyric infatuation for their author. But the romance scarcely flowered, for the bard returned to his native city for further communion with his muse. Some years later news came of his death, by suicide, due to some mental aberration.

Camille had by this time plunged into a second romance, more serious in nature. A handsome *genre* painter named Tihamér (his full cognominal handicap was Margittay és Sámsonyi Margittay) had taken Dobsina society by storm, not only because of his own handsome exterior, his charm and talent, but because of his distinguished and historic lineage. The young man's mother was Countess Pongrácz, herself related through the Illésházy-Illésfy line to the second Rákoczy—a fact which still gave to the family the *Herrenrecht* or Master Rights, whereby servants in bondage could be punished without trial by the lords

of the manor. To be sure, no use was made nowadays of this ancient privilege, since the old Countess and her brood found themselves in painfully straitened circumstances. Far from swinging the knout, as his ancestors had done, the ingratiating Tihamér broke bread with his valet and, more often than not, borrowed pin money from him. In return he painted innumerable *genre* portraits which hung in the best galleries and in his manservant's quarters as well.

It was through Tihamér's sister, Marishka, that the young nobleman and Camille met. Love blossomed as, for weeks on end, the artist sat at his easel and endeavored to recapture the sparkle and *joie de vivre* that illumined the young girl's face, for, in the full flush of seventeen, Camillushka was at her prettiest and most radiant best. She served as model for two of Tihamér's more successful compositions. One, entitled "Ballroom Butterfly," secured honorable mention at the Budapest Academy Exhibit. The other, "First Love," was purchased by order of His Majesty for the Hofburg Galleries in Vienna, and this proved a welcome windfall for the entire Margittay clan, since the Emperor's largesse was proverbial. But reckless celebrations attendant upon Tihamér's triumph (which, Countess Pongrácz felt certain, would lead to still greater achievement) swallowed up most of the profit, so that the young man's financial circumstances remained no better than before. He had appearances to preserve, as

well as a pretentious mother and a run-down estate to support; this meant that marriage to the little Fehér de Vernet girl would be out of the question, since Camille had no fortune to boast of. In order to meet his obligations, Tihamér was compelled to place the family title on the auction block. His fourteen quarterings (entitling him to sit with kings) and fifteen Rákoczy forebears attracted an awed maid from the manufacturing circles of Budapest; he married this button heiress and endured a childless union in which the line was wiped out.

For young Camille it was the first taste of heartbreak. She grieved bitterly and vowed that she was through with men forever.

Chapter 12

CAMILLE BECOMES A BARONESS

THE energetic Aunt Tilka came to the rescue. Having been notified by Vilma of Camille's unhappy romance, Tilka breezed into town and spirited the young girl off to Agram. Here Uncle Camillo, who welcomed any excuse for travel, promptly laid out a sight-seeing tour of all the European capitals. With his niece he visited Rome, Paris, London, Berlin and St. Petersburg, attending operas, concerts, circuses and theatres, so that Camillushka's brain reeled with new and colorful impressions. She returned to Agram, refreshed and grateful, though not cured of heartache. Tihamér was not easily forgotten.

Aunt Tilka sought a more drastic remedy. What the girl needed was another suitor. "The only way to forget that painter," she advised, "is to marry someone else.

There's Baron Marosffy, my dear, who seems very interested. . . ."

Camille had met Ernő von Marosffy-Fehéregyházy in her uncle's home and his admiring glances had not escaped her. There was an almost unearthly glow in his eyes that exerted a strange fascination. She knew she could not fall in love with this man, but his attention was balm to her humiliated ego, so she accepted the courtship with a false coquetry that could be excused only by her innocence and the deep hurt that gnawed within her.

Meanwhile she had again taken up her studies for the theatre. The dramatist Egly Mihály, a frequent guest at Aunt Tilka's musical soirées, introduced Camille to the artist colony of Nagybánya, where she enacted her first rôle in a translation of Freiligrath's play, *The Revenge of the Flowers*. Her debut was a marked success, due to an accidental circumstance of which the public knew nothing. Those were the days of much bosom heaving and heavy "emoting." The youthful Camillushka, built along voluptuous lines, amply satisfied popular demand in this respect. But her performance was heightened by a special touch of melodrama. During a climax in the play, as she stepped from the wings in an elaborate gown, her long train was caught backstage in some fixtures that covered the oil lamps. Sensing the difficulty at once (as who would not?) she immediately paused and played the scene

where she stood, hoping all the while that some observing stagehand would extricate her from her difficulty. But nothing of the sort happened. On the contrary, one of the lamps upset and Camille's train began to smoulder. This, too, the actress presently noticed. Knowing herself on fire, she shook and trembled in genuine terror, wringing her hands in truly heroic gestures. The audience went wild. Here was a female who could quiver convincingly! Drama, anguish and the breathlessness of passion were here personified. . . . "Bravo, bravissimo!" they cried, while fellow actors, attracted by the smell, stamped frantically on the leading lady's train and extinguished the incipient blaze.

At the close of that triumphant evening Baron Marosffy proposed, and Camillushka, cured for the moment of theatrical thrills, accepted. The engagement was announced and Vilma came with small Anthony, now a lad of five, from Dobsina. The wedding was celebrated with boisterous *éclat* by the entire artist colony of Nagybánya, though Mihály sulked at the prospect of losing his most promising star. He sat in a corner of the banquet hall where the feast was celebrated, vowing that he would never again waste his directorial talent on an unknown beginner who did not know her own mind, and who, after tasting the intoxicating wine of success, was still content to try domesticity. As for that importunate Marosffy, a curse upon him!



Strelisky, Budapest

Camille at the time of her first marriage to Baron Ernő von
Marosffy-Fehéregyházy

It happened that Mihály's maledictions were not needed. The marriage was of short duration. Barely three weeks after the ceremony, the bridegroom became ill—or rather, the illness that slumbered in him, and that had given to his eyes their sinister and unearthly glow, broke forth in all its virulence. In her eagerness to see Camille cured of her infatuation for Tihamér, the well-meaning Aunt Tilka had not taken the trouble to inquire into the past of the new candidate whom she herself thrust into the girl's path. Even cursory investigation would have established that Marosffy, though deceptively ruddy of countenance, was already a victim of galloping consumption. He died in less than a month.

Camille did not retain the name of Marosffy. Though people addressed her as the Baroness, she had felt herself so little married to her bridegroom of three weeks that the entire episode remained strangely unreal. Almost without change of pace she returned to the Nagybánya group theatre, and Mihály's tutelage, the sulking playwright and director having lost no time in seeking her again for his repertory.

A second season on the boards ripened her talent and helped to perfect her technique. Though still extremely young, she played all the parts that Mihály assigned to her: soubrettes, chambermaids, grandames, royal ladies and cocottes. Her mimicry was deft, even though she often lacked the maturity to grasp the rôle she was called

on to enact at short notice. At the same time vocal training was resumed, but teacher and pupil soon realized that opera was not Camille's predestined field; the voice that had shown such promise only a few years ago had narrowed in range and would at best serve for purposes of musical comedy. Camille was not discouraged; light opera suited her temperament. With Strauss, Lehár and Kálmán on the musical horizon, one could forego Wagnerian rôles without too great a pang. The enchanting era of operettas had just begun.

The theatre closed in April and Camille returned for the summer to Dobsina. Here matters had changed meanwhile and there was little to remind her of the unfortunate Tihamér romance. Even Countess Pongrácz had departed, joining her daughter-in-law, the button heiress, in Budapest.

In the Remenyik house Vilma lived tranquilly with her small son and the latter's newly arrived governess, Mademoiselle Hélène Romanans, who, Paris born, found the modest Slovak town unutterably boring. Even so, Mademoiselle had amiable qualities. After the day's lesson in French *grammaire* (which Camille promptly attended beside her brother, so as to refresh her own grasp of the language) the governess proposed many an exploring trip into the neighboring villages. Peasant homes were visited, quaint customs unearthed at christenings, funerals or weddings, all of which the insatiable Frenchwoman in-

vestigated at close hand. Again, when some necessary task of carpentering or other repairs brought workmen to the house, Mademoiselle was not above giving Anthony a recess, while she climbed the roof or otherwise took part in aiding the men at their chores. Whether she tossed a brick, lifted the trowel, or pumped water at the well, Mademoiselle airily justified her activities. "*Il faut m'utiliser!*" she cried with virtuous aplomb. The fact that she had not been hired to hold the paper hanger's ladder or the plumber's tools, but to supervise a small boy's lessons, in no wise deterred her. "I must make myself useful," was her motto. Quite frankly, this motto proved the good lady's undoing. One day, carried away by her zeal for action, she fell in love with the cobbler's apprentice and married him. After that, all her dynamic passion for usefulness seemed to go out of her. She was never bored again, being too tired with childbearing, cooking, washing and fighting the direst poverty. At rare intervals she visited her former employers again, castigating herself for her lack of appreciation in the old days when life had been easy and good. Recalling her former thoughtless discontent, she quoted the bitter proverb:

*"Rien est plus dur à supporter
que les jours les plus heureux . . ."*

("Nothing is more difficult to bear
than the time when we are happiest . . .")

For Camille the brief summer months of contact with Mademoiselle Hélène were highly profitable. Due to the many excursions into the provinces, the ladies were exposed to varied inflections of the Slovak dialect, and particularly to the mongrel speech known as the *Bulener*. For many years the philologist, Professor Martin Korda had made a study of dialectic peculiarities of the region with a view to gathering and printing a comprehensive anthology of native literature. In his effort to dig up ancient ballads and legends, the tireless professor has shunned no labors; on one occasion he was known to have assembled the oldest village cronies in the county and to have treated them to the quintessence of Slavic happiness, a brandy debauch. As the ancient crones grew mellow with drink, their tongues began to wag. A veritable Babe was let loose: limericks, quatrains, epic songs, fables, saga and ribald tales poured forth in wild profusion, while the happy professor merely sat and wrote. The anthology has recently been completed, but it was Camille's experimentation with dialect readings which popularized the native lore in more academic circles. She shyly requested Professor Korda's permission to inject a single *Bulener* poem into an all-Magyar program that was to be held for charity. The number selected was "The Appointment of the Judges," a ballad which recalled the forgotten custom of electing public officials according to their "weight" (that is, worth) rather than their astuteness in purchasing

votes. Two opposing candidates, taking the phrase literally, had therefore hoped to defeat each other by engaging in an eating marathon.

Due to the salty dialect, this recitation was enthusiastically received. Camille found herself stormed with requests for further and more serious samples. She added "Old Plesko," "Plague," "Soldier's Farewell" and others to her repertoire, soon acquiring something of a reputation in the field. A Budapest paper spoke favorably of her specialty and the magazine *Borzsem Jankó* (the Hungarian *Punch*) carried a caricature of Professor Korda surrounded by the bibbing peasant women of Dobsina, from whose lips he drew the text for Camille's recitations, while the young star stood at his elbow on an improvised stage, spouting with the steady flow of this inexhaustible pipe line.

Such early success led to contact with an estranged uncle, David Hus, who lived at Poprád in Bohemia. This uncle, a man of considerable wealth, had lost seven children during the terrible cholera epidemic that had blasted the region less than a generation ago. Thereafter the grieved father and his wife had retired from all human contact and had turned the Hus fortune over to charitable use—as a trust fund for the upkeep of a mountain sanatorium. Hus Park, as the establishment was called, had been intended originally as a refuge for the lonely and the sick, but its beauty and luxury soon attracted an elegant

patronage. People of prominence and fashion came, paying high fees to be admitted for a fortnight's rest, so that the sanatorium changed into a veritable resort, where writers, politicians, diplomats and artists gathered for a seasonal rendezvous. It was through this stream of visitors that David Hus heard of his niece and of the work she had become identified with.

He sent for her, eager to see what manner of creature she might be. The meeting proved mutually satisfying, since Camillushka felt herself drawn to the generous Aunt Julie and Uncle David no less than they to her. Furthermore, she found herself again thrown into the world of creative artists, for, at Hus Park, the poet Jókai currently held his literary circles. No one in Jókai's company could be less than outstanding in his field, whether it were music, the theatre or even the lighter forms of verse-spouting. Thus the young girl imbibed once more the fierce compulsion and what the Chinese call the "divine discontent" of the arts. Due to Uncle David's kindness she was permitted for a long and wondrous summer to sit at the feet of the masters.

She returned to Dobsina by way of Schwarzenberg, where Vilma came to meet her. In Vilma's company was a military gentleman of solemn and rather awesome appearance.

"Captain Zhaniel, in His Majesty's service at Kaschau," he introduced himself with a smart click of heels.

Camille greeted the stranger casually. She noted a nervous expression on her mother's face.

"The Captain," Vilma murmured confusedly, "is one of your ardent admirers. He—er—has spent the morning talking to me about you."

Again the girl did not pay marked attention. The adulation of a decidedly middle-aged cavalry officer was no longer a novelty in her life. In her brief stage career she had already become accustomed to bows and bouquets from the bald-headed brigade; that one of these ripe Romeos should communicate his enthusiasm to her mother was natural enough, though not particularly flattering. She thanked the gentleman politely and wondered vaguely why he did not consider himself dismissed.

At this point Vilma haltingly offered further explanations. The Captain, it appeared, had followed Camille's career with the liveliest concern; he disapproved of it and, furthermore, he was bent upon putting an end to it. In other words, he wished her to become his wife.

This was a trifle abrupt, though not without precedent in those *fin-de-siècle* days. Young ladies of the best circles were continually receiving offers of marriage through every conceivable channel except the normal one of a direct proposal; similarly they passed out their acceptance or refusal through fathers, uncles, remote cousins, or a convenient Great-Aunt Caroline. This procedure assured a lot of face-saving, since it simplified certain outspoken

discussions relative to dowries, social qualifications, and other unromantic trivia without which matrimony in the nineties would have been unthinkable.

Having been married before, Camille knew all this. Yet something about her present suitor's almost brutal directness frightened her. She did not like the man. A hard line about his jaw warned her that he might be ungracious—to the point of danger—if crossed. Confused, she forced herself to smile upon the stranger and begged to be excused.

That night she implored her mother to leave at once, so as to avoid any need of giving an outright—and negative—answer. She suddenly sensed that Captain Zhaniel's narrow eyes had rested on her for a long time, possessive, sinister, evil. She did not want to meet those eyes again, even for the instant necessary to reject his troth. Away, away, before it was too late.

Vilma was baffled by her daughter's behavior. She thought Captain Zhaniel a most distinguished and substantial personage. True, he was at least twenty-five years older than Camille, but his sportsman's figure and his military bearing, not to mention a trace of blue-black dye in his mustache, made him appear quite dapper. That he looked upon wedlock as a serious matter was obvious, which could not be said of poets, actors, or the Liszt-Wagner type of musicians in general. He would make Camille a good husband. Of course if the girl did not

want him, that was that. Vilma would never force a choice. Disappointed but cheerful, she acceded to her daughter's plea and the two ladies returned that night to Dobsina.

Three weeks went by and the Schwarzenberg incident seemed to have been forgotten. Camille prepared for a new season, this time in Budapest, under Mihály's management, with Jókai promising to write a prologue for her opening play. All thought of Zhaniel and his passion had dissipated in thin air, at least as far as the Remenyik household was concerned.

But the Remenyik ladies did not know Ferdinand Zhaniel or the persistence for which, in army circles, he was renowned. After the Schwarzenberg rebuke the determined Captain had headed straight for Agram where, inquiry had brought out, the girl of his choice had influential relatives. It was not uncommon for family pressure, especially on the part of wealthy kin, to achieve results; at any rate, the experiment was worth trying. Captain Zhaniel called on Aunt Tilka.

Had Tilka been a romance-starved and susceptible old maid, he could not have made an easier conquest. She was completely captivated by the darkly suave *K. und K.* (Royal and Imperial) officer whose eagerness to join the family circle instantly received her unreserved support. "I'll make that foolish girl see sense," was Aunt Tilka's pledge, while the Captain's kiss on her varicose hand sent

delicious quivers up her spine. That same day she put on her bonnet and took the night train for Dobsina.

In the Remenyik parlor long arguments ensued, with Vilma torn between her daughter's urge to be free and Tilka's equally ardent campaign for a complete surrender to the Zhaniel advances. The fact that the Captain had made so fine an impression at Agram confounded Camille somewhat.

"Did Uncle speak to him?" she asked, hoping to hear that Tilka's husband frowned upon the suit.

"Uncle Camillo was delighted," came Aunt Tilka's immediate response, since it was well known that the girl cherished her godfather's opinions beyond those of anyone else. "And furthermore, he says you must be mad to hesitate at grasping such a chance!"

This was serious. If Uncle Camillo really felt this way, why did he not write to her or come himself to say what was in his heart?

"I'll wait," said Camillushka, "until I hear from Uncle."

That made things awkward. Aunt Tilka must hasten back to find her husband, so as to explain the situation (of which he as yet knew nothing) and to coach him in the proper answers. Another week went by, during which the badgered Uncle Camillo struggled with a letter to his niece. When he at last dispatched the missive it did not contain the precise text Aunt Tilka had demanded, but left the loophole of a compromise. Let Camillushka

reflect and let the Captain wait. The girl had contracted to appear during the coming season in Budapest; she was honor bound to keep this commitment while the eager Zhaniel, on the other hand, was surely willing to prove his devotion by postponing the wedding for another year. Meanwhile, for the sake of formality, the couple might agree to an engagement. Engagements were purely experimental, said Uncle Camillo; they meant absolutely nothing.

Young enough to consider a single year almost an eternal span, the relieved Camillushka accepted this solution without qualms. In a year's time the "aged" Captain, whom she regarded as both senile and decrepit, would most certainly die. She had no objection to the prospect of attending his funeral and, as a dutiful fiancée, tossing a bit of sentimental turf into his tomb.

Darling Uncle Camillo! He had solved everything. . . . Betrothed, but quite light-hearted about her equivocal state, she continued her packing for the Budapest opening.

Chapter 13

AND A CAPTAIN'S WIFE

THE TRIAL period that followed was not so easy as Camillushka had gaily imagined. Captain Zhaniel was an attentive fiance, addicted to intensive correspondence. Twenty-four hours could not go by without a letter to his beloved, and sometimes there were two a day. In less than a year's time the girl found herself in possession of four hundred and six passionate epistles, as well as thirty telegrams.

While she could not possibly reply to such an avalanche (it is indeed doubtful whether she read each word) her peace of mind was utterly shattered. The ceaseless bombardment through the daily mails left her unfit for concentration or study. Mihály began to complain about her inability to remember lines, no less than her evident distraction during rehearsals. He wondered if he had made

a mistake after all. Perhaps the girl was not really talented? Was her professed devotion to the theatre mere caprice?

Camille herself did not know. Her mental confusion was intensified by a new factor in the plot. Captain Zhaniel had a sister by name of Eleonore, in Prague. This lady, a formidable dowager of almost sixty, decided to champion her brother's cause, since, it appeared, Zhaniel had encountered trouble winning wives before. Armed with sophistication and a tremendous *savoir-faire*, Eleonore set out to storm the unwilling fortress. She employed an extraordinary and impressive measure. Turning the tables and making Camille appear as the seeking party, while Ferdinand Zhaniel was the one besought, she calmly announced that Emperor Franz Joseph's permission must be obtained before the daughter of modest Dobsina gentry could marry a ranking officer in the imperial army.

This was a challenge to the young girl's pride. Well! Did not her portrait, painted by Tihamér, hang even now in the Hofburg Galleries? Let them arrange an audience with His Majesty! Camille would show them whether or not she was good enough to wed a captain of the Guards. . . .

This was precisely what the sly Eleonore wanted. Several difficult threads were pulled, at no small expense, to obtain a summons to Schönbrunn where, if the truth were told, the Emperor dwelt in blissful ignorance of Captain

Zhaniel's marital plans. To Franz Joseph, busy with affairs of state, it was a matter of supreme indifference whom the somewhat eccentric bachelor had chosen for a mate.

At last, however, the date for an audience had been set. Camille was notified to hold herself in readiness for the sublime moment; Eleonore herself would fetch the girl to Vienna.

During the journey the two ladies went over Camille's speech, polishing each note and minor inflection that would fall on the imperial ear. At Castle Schönbrunn, General von Pókay received the travelers and escorted them into the audience chamber.

It was at this point that Camille, never before afflicted with stage fright, completely lost her nerve. "I don't know whether I'm coming or going," she whispered to the General.

Her nervousness did not subside when the bearded monarch looked up inquiringly from a desk littered with papers. "Who is this?" Franz Joseph asked, still only vaguely aware of the Zhaniel petition.

Pókay made the presentation and nudged the young girl helpfully. But Camillushka had lost control of her own tongue. Unable to bring forth a word of German or Hungarian, she broke at last into French, remembering that this was the language of diplomacy. Himself a notoriously poor linguist, the Emperor did not know what to make of it. But he was not to be outdone by the glib

chatter of a teen-age wench. Though his own French had grown rusty during his declining years, Franz Joseph nodded vigorously and pretended to understand (he was already very hard of hearing). Then, with a magnanimous wave of his hand, the Emperor rose.

"I'll see what can be done," he said with sovereign dignity. The visitors were dismissed.

Camille had triumphed. She had established the acceptability of her status beyond a doubt. There was no Zhaniel too good for her to marry! Within a fortnight the regimental bulletin, submitted to the court, certified this fact and made it official. Now that she had proved she could marry him, Camille decided not to marry anyone at all, but to return at once to Budapest and her career.

This was where she miscalculated and made her mistake, as Eleonore quickly pointed out. Once His Majesty had been importuned over the question of a guardsman's wedding, the matter practically assumed a legal complexion. A would-be bride who had been presented at court must go through with her bargain, if she did not want to be guilty of misusing the sovereign's patience. In short, unless she chose dishonor, Camille could not turn back. Captain Zhaniel's neat scheme, carried out with his sister's aid, had worked admirably.

The wedding took place in Dobsina where Vilma and the Ruffinyi relatives surpassed themselves with the ultimate in hospitality. From Agram came Uncle Camillo

and Aunt Tilka in a landau loaded with presents. The groom's best friend, Major Stefan von Török, arrived from Kaschau to serve as witness to the troth.

Suse was in her glory throughout the festive day, for she had been granted a free hand with the menu. She had emptied her larder and had bought out the market place in an effort to spread the tables with the best possible assortment of culinary masterpieces. Great steaming hams, tender veal cutlets, smoked venison, roasted sausages, Bohemian dumplings with *powidl*, candied pomegranates, figs, plums and marzipan, all crowded the festive board in a magnificent and colorful array. Suse had done her best, because, like the susceptible Aunt Tilka, Suse approved of Captain Ferdinand Zhaniel.

"It is good to rest under an old tree," she quoted a local proverb.

The saying proved painfully true, for, even on her honeymoon, Camille discovered that she had married a man far removed from his first youth. Amorous in a middle-aged way, he had crotchety habits that bespoke long bachelorhood and an impending, if premature, senility. Though not yet fifty, he behaved—when not whipped by Cupid into a romantic froth—like nothing so much as a slightly shopworn faun. He suffered chronic rheumatism, punctuated by recurring attacks of asthma. His teeth were porcelain and his shoulders quadruple strips of tarleton padding. But most of all he worried about his

hair which, already noticeably thin, must be massaged nightly and coaxed into an oiled cap made from the top of an unidentified female stocking.

In addition, the Captain had a violent temper. His universal antidote for life's annoyances and disappointments was the threat of suicide. "I will shoot myself," he declared on an average of three times a week, if headaches lingered unreasonably long, or someone left a window open in his den. He threatened self-immolation also if Camille did not read to him, or if the tailor dunned him for a bill. In short, Ferdinand Zhaniel was neurotic and cantankerous in the extreme.

For his many eccentricities he was not totally at fault. Born into a family of the strictest martial tradition, he had been torn from his mother's arms at the age of six in order to be placed in the Prague military academy attended by his martinet father and grandfather before him. This cadet school—known also as the *Fisolenhaus* or "beanery," due to the monotonous reappearance of a certain vegetable on the daily menu—had made the child into an automaton. The boy grew up hedged in by rules of discipline which the man could never lay aside. He absorbed the army's rigid code of honor which, carried *ad absurdum*, bordered on the grotesque. This was where Zhaniel's morbid preoccupation with suicide originated, since the soldier's way out of any dilemma is death. To the be-medaled and bespangled Ferdinand the world remained a

barrack and life was a permanent drill. A broken schedule or an unpolished boot caused him to reach for his revolver.

Since he existed, literally, with his finger on the trigger, Camillushka found her new life at first quite disconcerting. It was a matter of nightly conjecture whether the Captain would be found at breakfast with his brains dashed out. But gradually the conclusion became unmistakable that this would never be the case, since circumstances always arose to prevent Zhaniel from carrying out his threat. An appointment with the barber, a dose of salts, the arrival of the postman, a scheduled headache tablet or the casual ringing of the telephone—any and all of these interruptions managed to stay the fatal blow. So when Camille heard her husband remark to his pistol rack as to a friend, "If this lumbago doesn't leave in twenty-four hours, I'll put a bullet through my head!" (he sometimes raised the ante to forty-eight hours, if the attack was particularly severe and called for reasonableness) she relaxed. What with a veritable apothecary's shop in the bathroom, the Captain had allowed a margin for the abatement of even the most stubborn pain.

Apart from the endless ministrations which her hypochondriac husband called for, Camille found another development in her marriage which she had not looked for. Zhaniel, who spoke Czech, German and Russian, decided to take up Hungarian, since this tongue was a requisite for advancement to that noblest branch of cavalry,



Ferdinand Zhaniel

A. Jandorf & Co.

the Honvéd Hussars. He demanded that his young bride give him daily lessons.

Camille made a brave attempt, but Magyar speech is incredibly difficult and almost never mastered by adults who did not hear it in childhood. The grammar is totally unrelated to Western tongues. Russian, despite the Cyrillic alphabet, was not half so puzzling; it had been an obligatory subject at Zhaniel's school ("in the event of mobilization against R," said a footnote in the curriculum).

To supplement the lessons, Camille engaged an Hungarian valet who was to practice conversation while attending to the Captain's toilet. In addition she obtained a subscription for the children's magazine *Kis Lap*, hoping that pictures and simple sentences might help with the preliminary hurdles. But it was all in vain. Zhaniel could not make head or tail out of it all and he gave up, at last, in disgust. Luckily he had not loaded his revolver and set himself a time limit for the mastery of Hungarian, or there would have been an incontrovertible need for face-saving by calling his own bluff.

For the rest, the life of an officer's wife (*ärarische Dame* was the term used) proved interesting enough. Regimental activities at Prague, and later at Kaschau, were made lively and exciting by the many youthful members of the officers' corps. Costume balls, dinners, fox hunts, croquet parties and parades followed one another in quick suc-

cession so that Camillushka, who was the youngest bride in the regiment, found her share of diversion.

But matters changed presently with the arrival of a new commandant named Braumüller, who had once been jilted by a girl and had thereafter become a rabid woman hater. Under the Braumüller régime the ladies were barred from the Casino where all regimental festivities took place.

Fortunately the dry climate of Kaschau did not agree with the commandant's hay fever and he was compelled to demand a transfer. His successor, Count Uxküll von Gillenband, was no misogynist. On the contrary, he was a gentleman of few inhibitions and a charming Viennese accent.

At the first officers' smoker von Gillenband banged the table with both fists as his eyes scanned the room in vast disappointment. "*Zum Teufel no a Moll!*" he roared in his strong dialect. "*Habt's denn keine Weiber nicht?*" ("The Devil! Have you no women?")

The bars were let down and the Kaschau belles appeared en masse. The new commandant, it was plain to see, had never been jilted by anyone; he knew exactly how to treat the fair sex. Before long the wives of all his officers sighed for his compliments and implored His Excellency to attend their dinners. This was precisely what the wily fellow wanted. A bachelor himself, he loved home cooking and could never get enough of it. By showing the most

exquisite gallantry to the ladies of the garrison he assured himself of their devotion and his favorite dishes forever after.

Only one of the Kaschau wives did not reward the commandant in fitting fashion. She was the young Countess Larisch who, inexperienced in culinary matters, found herself unable to spread a noteworthy table. For this she was severely reprimanded by her husband, who felt humiliated before his comrades because he could not share their pride as hosts.

"Look at that little Zhaniel person," he muttered sullenly. "She is only a child, but I bet she can teach you plenty!"

At this the Countess lost no time in calling upon Camilushka and borrowing all the recipes that had been made famous by old Suse in Dobsina. The two young women and their scullery maids (army officers could not afford expensive cooks for their wives) conferred together and experimented for six weeks. At the end of that time the Countess returned triumphantly to her fireside, armed with knowledge and audacity. She took instant command of her own pots and pans, with the result that her husband sat down that night to a double helping of delicious "*Tambourschwanzel*" or "potato noodles in the shape of a drummer boy's pigtail." (Many Austrian forms of speech were still held over from the powdered wig and snuffbox era of the great Empress Maria Theresia.)

It was with domestic occupations of the above character that Camille spent the first year of her marriage, and, in a manner of speaking, the time was not too unbearable. She had been reared to respect the conventions and to accept the then fashionable "marriage of convenience" as woman's fate. In a secure and established society love matches or elopements were not considered quite respectable, since they smacked too much of frivolity and an ephemeral mode of life.

As for Zhaniel, he was quite content. Soon after the wedding Camille had come into an inheritance (from the kind uncle whom she had visited as a girl at Oravica on the Rumanian border) which, in the Captain's words, was very refreshing. It contributed to the comforts of his station and even put him in line for advancement, since affluent officers added to the army's prestige. Zhaniel's low rank, considering his age, was a stigma occasioned by a caprice of his own; during his early thirties he had been struck by a sudden notion to abandon the service and to set himself up in business as an importer of silks. After some years of familiarity with creditors and red ink he was cured of this expensive whim. Repentantly he donned his uniform and returned to the army, finding himself meanwhile far out of line from his contemporaries who had gone steadily upward.

Camille's agreeable nest egg helped to bridge the gap.

Before long Captain Zhaniel rose to the rank of major, with a summons to serve at staff headquarters in the fortress at Budapest.

He was very pleased with this. He heaped affectionate endearments on his bride and insisted that she call him by his own favorite diminutive of "Bubi."

Chapter 14

THE CALL OF THE STAGE

THE TRANSFER to Budapest brought with it a new mode of life.

Quartered in the immediate vicinity of the Royal Palace, high up on the Hills of Buda, Camillushka was confronted with the rigors of command appearances at official functions of every description. The climax on the year's calendar was the palace banquet given by His Majesty for all guardsmen who wore the gold collar; for this occasion the Emperor traveled especially from Vienna to sit down at table with his officers and their wives. Since Zhaniel belonged to the chosen circle, there was much worrying about Camille's coiffure, her gowns, her jewels. For days on end curtsies were practiced and proper distances measured for the proper dropping of a lady's train. Before long Camille became an expert in the art of walk-

ing backward without cracking an ankle or ripping off the triple ruching on her stiff taffeta dress.

There was another form of "court life," unknown to the general public, in which she engaged. During many palace functions, when His Majesty dined alone or in a small circle, the royal kitchens remained burdened with an oversupply of foodstuffs. Elaborate dishes came back from the table untouched by the almost ascetic monarch, which in turn compelled other diners at the royal board to desist as well.

Distraught, the imperial chef gazed at his masterpieces with melancholy eyes. What to do with the Lucullan leftovers? At this a kitchen orderly offered a grain of sensible advice. Why not open the back door of the palace and hold a sale of the unwanted tidbits?

The idea met with enthusiastic approval, particularly on the part of the always hungry garrison. From every house in the vicinity of the castle, orderlies appeared with baskets and platters, to see what they might purchase off the sovereign's table. Army wives began to depend on these surreptitious shopping tours whenever they had need of a particularly rare *hors d'œuvre*. In fact, before long the regiment timed its private entertaining to coincide with those occasions when it was known that His Majesty would be "in residence," so as to be certain of an exquisitely regal menu. Whether Franz Joseph was ever aware of this traffic going on behind his back remains a mystery.

But until the year of his death the practice remained in force, becoming a beloved and much relished tradition.

Throughout this period Camille's inheritance had covered the expenses of the Zhaniel household. But the obligations of a life lived in the shadow of royalty put that inheritance to a severe strain. The upkeep on gowns, furs, gala uniforms, as well as the indispensable carriage-and-pair, soon dissipated the modest fortune.

Recriminations followed as "Bubi" complained that Camille's dowry had been insufficient in the first place. He needed a far wealthier wife to support him in the style to which she had accustomed him.

There were tears and scenes which led to separations. Camille would go home to Dobsina to take counsel with her mother. Invariably Vilma sent her daughter back, supplied with funds and a large helping of advice. But this could not go on indefinitely. The family coffers must be replenished by some other means.

For the first time since she bore the name of Zhaniel, Camille's eyes turned back to the stage (her secret thoughts had often dwelt there). Was there a place for her on the boards she had once so foolishly forsaken?

She could not consider enrolling once more at the National Drama School, since there was no time for study. She must find employment quickly. For this purpose it might be best to turn to Mihály or, better still, the great

Jókai, though these two comrades of the past would doubtless have no traffic with her.

As it happened, Mihály had returned to Nagybánya to direct the Provincial Players, while the poet was reported in Italy on holiday. In the meantime Budapest's theatrical fate had come to rest in the hands of a veritable dynasty of the drama, the Rákosi family, composed of three brothers and three sisters. Jenő, the eldest, was founder and editor of the outstanding newspaper, *Budapesti Hírlap*, as well as a dramatist of renown; a glutton for work, he had once lost an eye because the time set for a necessary bit of surgery conflicted with the opening of his first play, so Jenő sacrificed a retina to take his curtain call. The second brother, Victor, wrote comedies and humorous essays under the strange pseudonym of Sypulus. The third, Gyula (Julius), completed the picture by getting himself appointed as state physician for all the metropolitan playhouses. As for the women of the family, one was Madame Csepregy, widow of the regional playwright; another, Eva, had married the stage manager of the Népszínház (Civic Playhouse), while Szidi, the youngest and most talented, was the leading actress of the National Theatre.

To be sure, at the time Camille called on her, the glorious Szidi was no longer in her prime. She was divorced from a prominent counselor at law, Zoltan von Beothy, and the mother of two grown sons. But her

renown was undimmed and she remained a favorite long after the bloom had passed; it was indeed rumored that her eventual retirement would not rob Hungary of an irreplaceable talent, since the beloved diva intended to open a dramatic school for followers of her art.

For Camille this was a deciding incentive. Admitted into the presence of her idol (she had long worshiped Szidi from afar) the young woman brought forth her plea.

"Can you act?" was the prompt inquiry, to which Camille replied by repeating the solo scene from *Első Bal* (*The First Ball*) written for her by Mihály.

Szidi watched critically, then nodded her approval. "Our local ingenues are getting overripe," she said in a matter of fact tone. "I think there is a place for you, since you are so young."

Camille was disappointed. "Have I no talent? Am I only young?"

The older woman smiled. "You have great talent," she said, "but it is undisciplined and we must work hard, first of all, on that Slav accent. This is pure Magyar soil, you know."

Camillushka knew. She had heard, often enough, the Hungarian outcry "*Rettenetes!*" ("Terrible!") when someone murdered the classic tongue of Saint Stephen. She must avoid this pitfall at all costs and free herself as

Henceforth all use of dialect, particularly the amusing *Bulener* with which she had had such success, must be reserved for regional rôles.

Radiantly happy, she returned to her hilltop home in Buda. She was late for dinner and Zhaniel was already waiting.

"Where have you been?" he asked in a rising temper, for he was of an intensely jealous nature.

She explained, haltingly at first, then with increasing courage, her plan to ease their financial predicament by going on the stage.

"The stage!" he roared, growing almost apoplectic. "Are you insane?"

No, she said quietly, she was not insane. But she was at her wits' end over the accumulated bills. Somebody must pay them; his salary being what it was, somebody must go out and work at a profitable trade.

Zhaniel was offended. The army, supported by the state, could not be made responsible for domestic expenses. It paid an officer his pin money and that was all. Women who married into the military were fully aware of this great honor bestowed on them. In turn, they must do their part by furnishing an adequate dowry.

"But I am trying to do my part," Camille insisted; "I am trying to earn some money."

He glowered at her. "By making an exhibition of yourself? I forbid you to enter a theatre!"

She was not intimidated. "It is too late," she said. "I've already taken a job."

Major Zhaniel fumed, stormed and fretted. He took to his bed with migraine and loaded his revolver three times a day. But Camillushka remained adamant. She was weary of arguing with landlords, grocers, tailors, whose overdue bills lay piled up on her husband's desk. There must be an end to all this worry and humiliation.

"Very well," Zhaniel sneered at last, "if you don't care how you humiliate me, run off with your comedians. The law is on my side. Our marriage can be annulled."

She thought this only a threat, like his old trick of committing suicide, and she accepted it as such. Once her new earnings poured in he would change his tune and rejoice in a return of affluence. But she was wrong. Always difficult to understand, Zhaniel now surprised her by his iron determination to force a break. He meant what he had said. Two months later he sued for divorce on the ground of incompatibility (his request for an annulment, charging desertion, had failed). By the end of that year he was already spending his furlough at one of the more crowded spas, looking for another wife.

For Camille a period of real work began. In order to furnish her daughter with a respectable background (divorce was a shocking thing in those days) Vilma moved to Budapest, bringing the seven-year-old Anthony with her. The family took a small house on the corner of

Erzsébet Körut, only a few steps from the popular Newyorki Kávéház (New York Coffee House) where theatrical and literary folk gathered for interminable conversation. Over a single cup of coffee it was possible to sit here for hours, reading all the world's leading newspapers at the expense of the management. People also read the free magazines to shreds, yet never wore out that initial cup of coffee. Even so, the Newyorki survived miraculously; it still stands in Budapest today, a haven to the literati—both hungry and great. At one reserved table Ferenc Molnár wrote nineteen of his most popular plays.

Before starting rehearsals at the National Theatre it was advisable for Camille to enter the Fülöp School for a bit of brushing up on diction and voice. She was coached by Fülöp himself and took a short singing course under Aranka von Willrother, an extremely talented drug addict who achieved wonders with her pupils. Camille made rapid progress. Two and a half years of marriage to Zhaniel had obviously not dimmed the fire of her enthusiasm for everything pertaining to the stage. Vilma, too, was helpful and understanding; she had no old-fashioned Philistine notions, but rather encouraged and furthered her daughter's career wherever possible.

In the fall of 1890 Camille Fehér de Vernet was billed for the first time in a Rákosi production, playing Noemi in Jókai's *Man of Gold*. She followed this with the ingenue rôle in Csiky's *Grandmother* and then took the

part of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from which she rose to more sophisticated characterizations in the field of drawing-room comedy.

At the time the name of Herczeg figured prominently on the Hungarian stage. Ferenc Herczeg (a generation later Géza would carry the name overseas) was garnering applause with his masterpiece, *The Clever Woman*. The leading rôle, played by Camille, proved the season's crowning success.

With the coming of summer the company disbanded, but Camillushka still had not enough. She joined the small *Stadtparktheater* and played in stock under the direction of Feld Mátyi until September. Then followed a short rest at Dobsina before autumn brought a new opening in *Cyprienne*, an ironic play dealing with the misunderstandings between a young wife and an aged husband. Camillushka needed only to recall her life with Ferdinand Zhaniel in order to inject the utmost realism into the lines. It was conceded by even seasoned colleagues that on this occasion she stole the show.

Her monologues, which she had forsaken for some time, presently enjoyed a new vogue due to an enterprise that must be regarded as the forerunner of the modern radio. It was the Amusement Telephone. Budapest led the world in the application of the telephone principle to the field of public speaking and musical communication; two young men named Virág and Pollák worked



Camille in *The Gypsy Baron*

Kozmata, Budapest

out a scheme whereby daily programs could be heard in homes, hotels, hospitals, offices and schools, from eight in the morning until the closing of the opera at night. Subscribers got the utmost in service from their telephone; they simply asked to be connected with the entertainment section, whereupon they adjusted their earphones and sat back in comfortable armchairs to listen to news of the day, kitchen recipes, the stock-market report, lectures or concerts and, lastly, a slumber hour for the kiddies. The telephone company itself was the sending station where Virág and Pollák directed the programs. The performers—all of them recognized musicians, artists, journalists and actors of rank—were engaged at acceptable salaries. They played to invisible audiences who made it a daily practice to listen in. This, before the turn of the century!

A particular favorite among Camille's telephone monologues was Sebök Zsigmund's *Le Vis-à-vis*, which the author had written especially for her. The action dealt with a young girl at a window, talking to a stranger opposite and gradually falling in love with him. Since the stranger remained invisible, both pantomime and vocal inflections conveyed the story on the stage; over the telephone, pantomime was useless. It was the voice alone that counted. For Camille this proved a severe test, for she had never done anything without gestures. But her performance of *Le Vis-à-vis* met with such popular acclaim that she was featured on the annual New Year's Eve program;

for years it was her voice that greeted Budapest merry-makers at the hour of midnight, to announce the start of another earthly cycle.

Despite these gratifying successes, wealth did not pour into the small house on the Erzsébet Körút. Camille's salary covered rent, food and Anthony's schooling, but there was still the matter of her wardrobe to be thought of. The pretty clothes that had made up her trousseau were still in good condition, but, while they had appeared quite dazzling at military and even court functions, their brilliance faded behind footlights. She now needed dresses of more subtle lines, flashier colors, bolder cut. How to obtain them? Vilma came to the rescue by searching out an impoverished modiste who, for a modest wage, stitched incessantly on silks and satins while Camille and her mother evolved ever new models from journals and periodicals borrowed at the near-by Newyorki Kávéház. The arrangement proved ideal in all respects but one: Frau Petz, the seamstress, was emotionally unbalanced. She was deeply affected by even the remotest events that could have no possible bearing on her life, such as the Lisbon earthquake or a forgotten locust plague in Indo-China. Despite the excellence of her work, there was never any certainty that she would get a garment finished, what with the thousand and one world happenings that preyed forever on her mind. Thus she once cut up an unstylish fur coat in order to make it into a chic Russian

kazabaiķa or jacket, when news arrived that Archduke Joseph's young son Ladislaus had suddenly died. Frau Petz had never seen an archduke in her life, nor did she have a bowing acquaintance with the corpse, but there was havoc at the sewing machine. Though magazines and papers were carefully hidden from sight, the good woman spied a headline on the streets and promptly took leave of her senses. She put on widow's weeds and beat her already flattened chest in sign of mourning. "Oh, Ladi! Ladi!" she whimpered as a freshet of tears drowned out her voice. An uninformed observer might have supposed that a romance of deepest purple linked the blubbering lady to the deceased prince.

Naturally the sewing suffered. It took Frau Petz several months to string her unstrung person together again; meanwhile her customers were left with slashed fur coats and dresses on their hands. The *kazabaiķa*, which Camille needed for the sleighing scene in *The Tsar's Beloved*, was particularly indispensable since the play opened in less than a week. Frantically Vilma sought a furrier who would complete the job on such short notice but none would take the order. At last one kindly tailor took pity on the ladies' plight and offered advice on how the work could be finished at home. He taught Vilma that fur must be cut on the wrong side with a sharp blade and stitching must proceed in the same way, that is, working with the hide and not the fur side. Having gleaned this

information, the matter was easy. Thanks to the hysterical fit thrown by Frau Petz, Camille and her mother learned a fundamental trick that would keep their wardrobe budget down to a minimum. The remodeling of fur coats, always an expensive item on the clothes bill, could hereafter be accomplished at will and without noticeable cost beyond the price of a good pattern.

The Budapest season continued with éclat. Such serious works as Madach's *Tragedy of Man* and Rákosi's *Oedipus* alternated with the gay operettas of Strauss, Lehár and Millöcker. The theatrical firmament sparkled with stars of varying magnitude, among them the immortal tragedienne, Maria Jászay, as well as Theresa Czillag, Laura Helvey and Ilka Láncki. In the field of musical comedy Clara Kúri vied with Aranka Hegyi for a music-mad city's acclaim.

But all this galaxy of local talent was presently eclipsed by the encroachment of competition from abroad—and what competition! During the nineties, Italy was sending the glorious Eleonora Duse across the Continent on her triumphant tour, while from France the brilliant Sarah Bernhardt simultaneously burst forth. Both luminaries succeeded each other at close intervals in Budapest, paralyzing local theatre activities and throwing the city into a state of discord that would endure for well nigh a generation, or at least until the most belligerent spokesman

from either the Duse or Bernhardt camp had departed this earth. It seemed congenitally impossible for anyone to worship at the shrine of both goddesses at once; Duse followers loathed the French rival with cool Olympic passion, while converts to the cult of the Divine Sarah had nothing but contempt for the marvel from the Apennines.

Chapter 15

BERNHARDT AND DUSE

CAMILLE FEHÉR DE VERNET was twenty-four when the blazing battle of the mimes first broke about her ears. She was tossed back and forth on the choppy sea of public opinion, unable to arrive at a decision of her own. Nor did the famous actresses in question pour soothing oil upon the stormy waters. On the contrary, they fed the general controversy by duplicating each other's repertoire and confounding audiences everywhere with their contradictory interpretation of identical rôles. The prize bone of contention was always the renunciation scene in that dependable tear-wringer, *La Dame aux Camélias*, during which Marguerite gives her pledge to Armand's stern father that she will not see her lover again. Duse, the great naturalist, played this scene without heed to stage conventions or restraint; she dropped on

a sofa, turned her face to the wall and sobbed until the mattress shook. Bernhardt, on the other hand, carrying technique to a point of exquisite refinement, crossed her feet daintily at the ankle, reclined in a well-controlled swoon and, still facing the audience as per rule 4 in the actor's catechism, dripped a neat glycerine tear into her handkerchief.

Art or naturalism? Here was the great question of the day. If the vast unrestraint of Duse triumphed, one might as well close all dramatic schools, and dismiss actors from rehearsals; let people study lines at home and read them off as their instinct dictated. Duse herself paid no attention to cues. It was extraordinarily difficult to play beside her, for she so immersed herself in a characterization that it possessed her utterly; carried away with intensity of feeling, she expanded or contracted her lines without regard for dramatic structure, always expecting her co-workers to rise to her own genius for improvisation. When this did not happen and, through no fault of their own, successive leading men broke down, the great actress picked up the floundering action and with infallible mastery turned each crisis into a breath-taking personal triumph. Here, said her enemies, was the crux of Duse's phenomenal success. Actually every performance of the inimitable Eleonora accrued to her personal glory, at the possible expense of many a fine colleague, for to play beside Duse was to be doomed forever to the shadows.

But matters were not much better for the good troupers that surrounded the gilded Sarah Bernhardt, since the French star likewise had a boundless capacity for absorbing spotlight, limelight and sunlight. But Bernhardt's acting technique followed a pattern directly opposite that employed by her rival. Far from indulging in the hazard of improvisation, Sarah was always letter perfect. Her passion for exactitude, to the smallest comma, sent nervous chills down the spines of her fellow workers so that they suffered agonies of fear lest a wrong syllable escape them. Here again, if they were too tongue-tied to utter sound, or else stammered their lines in nervous haste, the genius of Bernhardt unfolded in all its splendor. A play in which the Divine Sarah minced precisely across the stage and gave disciplined rein to her phenomenal memory was as personal a triumph as the Duse freshet of emotion.

Another point of contrast between the two women was the matter of gestures. Duse dispensed with them altogether, except in the large unstudied sense. Her brows contracted, her lips tightened, her arms rose in horror only if her own emotion at the moment of performance (rather than the script) so dictated. This uncertainty left a Duse partner forever in doubt whether anything the Great One did would ever be repeated. Bernhardt, in turn, could be depended upon to curl her little finger just so while waving a villain out of her presence, and woe to fellow actors who failed to sigh, palpitate or sneeze at the

appointed instant; the French Miracle Woman demanded as much of them as she did of herself. Since she rehearsed before mirrors, studying each posture down to its finest detail, members of her ensemble were urged to do likewise. In a passionate sonnet Edmond Rostand, twenty-four years younger than Bernhardt and the most devoted of her lovers, called her "*Reine de l'attitude et Princesse des gestes*" ("Queen of attitudes and Princess of gestures"), a compliment that Duse would have rejected with the utmost indignation.

On one issue, however, the two actresses saw eye to eye: the star system. More than anyone else in theatrical history, they furthered the idea of building a performance around the personality of a single artist. To this end both Duse and Bernhardt always traveled with an inferior company, realizing that mediocrity in the ensemble gave added luster to the stellar rôle.

The question of make-up found them again at sword's point. Duse scorned grease paint, powder, lipstick. Her ineffable climaxes were achieved by means of a deep and extraordinary coloring of voice. All need for ornament, posturing or grimaces vanished when Eleonora spoke. . . . It was not so with Sarah, whose chalk-white face was coated heavily with cosmetics until, in the words of George Bernard Shaw, the scarlet mouth painted across it looked "like the gash in a London letter box". . . . Duse's hair was natural, turning in time quite gray; the Bernhardt

locks, frizzy to begin with, were further crimped with irons, pins and curling papers, while their shade varied from burnished gold to russet and deep sable.

As far apart as their artistic poles were the characters of these two immortal women, so that there could be no common ground on which they might amicably meet. Despite effusive professional courtesies shown on every public occasion, each avoided all personal relations with the other. At bottom this was due to a profound difference in their natures. Duse was self-possessed and utterly assured of her own worth, hence the contempt with which she regarded any effort at personal embellishment; Bernhardt, on the other hand, never forgot the imperfections of the human frame and all the blemishes that flesh is heir to. One of Sarah's earliest obstacles to fame was her lack of a bosom, in a day when opulent breastworks proved more essential than intelligible diction. With touching humility she recognized this flaw and hastened to remedy it. "*Quand même!*" ("Nevertheless!") was the Bernhardt motto while with nimble fingers she stuffed wads of cotton into the lining of her dresses. Duse, having no need for such devices, smiled at them in statuesque serenity—a goddess who knew the world to be helplessly at her feet.

There is no denying that Bernhardt made more friends. Her very modesty, coupled with an excruciating capacity for self-criticism, never allowed her to take adulation for

granted. Sarah strove for applause and was childishly happy when she got it. She suffered pangs of morbid self-depreciation when wounded by a critical dart. . . . In contrast, Eleonora's hauteur seemed almost beyond reason, alienating, as it did, some of her most adoring followers, for example, Queen Margherita of Italy herself. On April 9, 1895, during a performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* in Rome, Her Majesty requested Duse to visit the royal box. The Queen's chamberlain, Signor Alhaira, transmitted the invitation but returned presently without the actress. Duse had refused with the remark "*Italia viene a me!*" ("Italy comes to me!") That same year the incomparable Eleonora left the King of Sweden standing outside her dressing-room door until he slipped a note over the transom, with the words: "It is not a monarch, but the humblest of your subjects who begs to be received."

On another occasion, in St. Petersburg, Duse indulged a sudden caprice and canceled a performance just as the signal had been given for the curtain to go up. "But, Madame," cried the frantic stage director, "this is impossible—there are crowned heads in the theatre!" Duse gave him a withering look. "You mean the Czar?" she mocked. "At least, you won't have to refund his money, because he didn't pay to get in." With this she flung a wrap about her shoulders and drove off to her hotel.

The animus thus created by the famous Eleonora was reflected in the words of leading critics of her day. Max

Beerbohm, author and caricaturist, wrote: "I know the rôles of Magda, Paula Tanqueray and Fedora well enough to be convinced that Duse has no conception of any one of them. I admire her exquisite and eloquent hands. I see power and vitality in her face, but my prevailing impression is that of a great egoistic force—of a woman overreaching herself without concern for the reaction of critics or public. Her methods are so arbitrary that in the name of art one must protest against them." Of Bernhardt the same writer stated: "With her volcanic nature and no less volcanic career, she is the most magnificent of living tragediennes, whose genius has so often thrilled me beyond measure!"

On the other hand the Swiss journalist, Knut Wellhorn, exclaimed in 1900: "Duse is absolutely a grand sorceress; she acts with such extreme naturalness as completely to eclipse Sarah, who unfortunately came after her and appeared affected and theatrical." This sentiment was echoed by Shaw's biting dictum: "Duse has completely annihilated her posturing rival, the French puppet, Bernhardt."

Thus, beyond a doubt, both women left ineradicable footprints behind them as they reached the pinnacles of fame and crushed all lesser talents in their path by the sheer force of their own rare personalities. Both drew a multitude of followers from every walk of life, splitting the artistic world into two opposing camps.

"Art is natural!" cried Duse addicts, with a sneer at the histrionic school of acting. "We want a true photograph of life, not a caricature."

"Art is artifice!" replied the Bernhardt apostles. "It is the supreme imitation and elaboration of life."

"Eleonora's tears are real."

"Who cares?" came the scoffing answer. "A mimicked tear makes for better timing."

"Begone with all technique and trickery!"

"Technique is everything. If you want nature, don't come to the theatre; go into the kitchen and applaud the cook, who lacks the subtlety to be anything but a cook!"

Thus ran the arguments throughout the heyday of the illustrious rivals. Nor would the issue ultimately disappear. Long after the imperishable names of Duse and Bernhardt became a distant memory, men would ponder the eternal riddle posed by the paradox of Nature versus Art. . . .

Chapter 16

A BUNCH OF VIOLETS

HER CONTACT with the two great international luminaries of the stage wrought a vital change in Camille's life.

Up to this point she had looked on her career in a somewhat experimental frame of mind. She had inherited a trace of Vilma's self-doubt and timidity. Was she truly gifted? Could she arrive behind the footlights and, once there, maintain herself? These were questions that had crept up in quiet moments to torture her questioning mind. Having resolved, after the luckless Zhaniel episode, to stand on her own feet, she sometimes trembled at the thought of failure.

The arrival in Budapest, first of Duse, then of the French Sarah, had served to electrify the entire personnel of the Hungarian National Theatre. For the rest of that

season the players were possessed and exalted by the experience that had been theirs. Camille in particular felt herself carried away on a wave of enthusiasm which fired her spirit to ever greater efforts. At last she knew that the stage was her true world and that she must give her heart to it forever. Though secretly Vilma still hoped that her daughter would find security and happiness in a new marriage, Camille's back was definitely turned on domesticity. With vestal determination the young woman consecrated herself to study and to the perfect mastery of her chosen art.

Definitely she was not a tragedienne. Her stature (she was still petite), her laughing eyes and pretty mouth could not be translated—at least during these early years—into the grave outline of sorrow or despair. "*Camillushka ist unsere Freude!*" wrote Moritz Szeps in his Vienna *Tageblatt* during a brief Austrian engagement. ("Camillushka is our joy!")

But even for her gay rôles she required intensity and depth, two qualities that the work of Duse and Bernhardt brought home to her. As for the current controversy on the subject of Nature versus Art, that is, the Italian school versus the French, both of which were embodied at the moment in strongly individualistic exponents, Camille aligned herself unhesitatingly with the Bernhardt camp. Duse's uncontrolled excursions into the realm of self-expression, her loudly convulsive sobs which (because

they were genuine) often held up action and disrupted all sense of timing, her extreme pride and her consequent scorn of personal adornment—all these manifestations of a rare and untrammelled soul seemed unrelated to the nineteenth-century theatre. The *froufrou* epoch of Rostrand, Sudermann and Maeterlinck reveled in gestures, cues and artful posturings, based on age-old classic conventions. The passage of time had left its mark on these conventions, which, simple at first, had reached a high degree of complexity, but the basic structure of “play” rather than “reality” remained. Play required rules; reality dispensed with them.

In taking Bernhardt for her model, Camille Fehér de Vernet soon won an ardent following from the Franco-philic camp. Her mannerisms captivated, her gowns and feather boas beguiled. She wore high heels, dressed her hair in ringlets, donned wide-brimmed Gainsborough hats and twirled a lace parasol in the best boulevard style. She acquired a distinct Gallic flavor and, aided by the partly French name of her father, was soon affectionately dubbed *La Parisienne*. As for her gestures, she was versatile in the extreme; not in vain had she grown up from babyhood among voluble and expansive Czechs, Slovaks, Austrians, Magyars, all of them given to lively gesticulation. She used her fingers, hands and dimples to full advantage when coquetry or archness was called for, while the Bernhardt stride, the sudden lift of shoulders and the melan-



Fanto, Kcskenet

Discovery scene from Madame Sans Gêne

choly droop of eyelids became her stock in trade for more sophisticated rôles.

The following winter saw her in a series of Shakespearean parts, among them Juliet, Desdemona, Viola and—for the third consecutive season—the too whimsical and annoying Puck (though admirably suited to it, she did not enjoy this characterization).

In addition, Camille supported the great Maria Jászay in a classical repertoire that featured Medea and Elektra, as well as Iphigenia in Aulis, while her acquaintance with the moderns was bolstered by the new works of Gerhardt Hauptmann, Gabriele d'Annunzio and two promising Frenchmen, Ohnet and Sardou. At the same time there were constant requests on the part of audiences for a repetition of *Cyprienne* in which Camille starred beside the current matinee idol Ademar Kálmán, a man of extraordinary good looks and correspondingly dangerous reputation. Ladies of Budapest society persisted in falling in love with this personable young actor who, in addition to his charm, boasted kinship with the wealthy family of Ciszér von Szent Királyi. He was thus a theatrical favorite no less than a highly desirable matrimonial plum.

It was during a Sunday performance in the spring of 1893 that Camille became aware of a dark-haired school-girl with enormous brown eyes who sat in the front row of the orchestra pit, just beyond the footlights, her white face tense with rapture. She had sat there before—at every

matinee, in fact. Her expression never changed as, with breathless absorption, she followed the activities on the stage. That her attention was riveted on Ademar soon became obvious; it was further corroborated when the girl appeared presently in the wings, a few paces from the actor's dressing room, bearing a bunch of violets for her idol. As it happened, the backstage passages were crowded with other worshipers at the Kálmán shrine, whom the delighted grease-paint hero received with open arms. His heart was a house of many mansions and Ademar did not like even a corner of it empty; he cultivated his fans, dictated answers to their letters, autographed pictures and generally fed the fires which his impeccable profile, passionate voice and satisfying silhouette in tights had ignited. Eager to conserve and augment his following, Ademar kissed old ladies' hands and younger ladies' lips, while murmuring innocuous compliments into the ears of palpitating spinsters.

All this came under the traditional head of recognized professional tactics, yet there was something about the handsome Ademar's unabashed enjoyment of his popularity that repelled one lone individual in the legion of admirers flocking to his door. At sight of the actor benignly lapping up the waves of adulation that poured about his feet, the girl from the front row suddenly tossed aside her violets. Her white face grew flushed as she turned quickly about and fled.

In her haste to get away she did not watch where she was going, but ran straight down the corridor toward the dressing room of the leading lady. A door opened and Camille Fehér de Vernet emerged in furs and ostrich plumes.

The girl's dilemma had grown decidedly worse, for, while she had found herself only a moment ago submerged in a sea of hysterical females, she now stood conspicuously amid a masculine delegation that had come to pay court to the beloved Cyprienne. There seemed to be no way to turn; it was an impossible situation.

At this point a kindly voice was heard. "You have come to see me?" exclaimed the actress. "How nice!" With this she took the girl's hand and led her inside, closing the door upon the waiting cavaliers.

The interview that followed was somewhat less than memorable in view of the false premise on which it attempted to rest. The adolescent visitor had not come to see Camille at all and she was not entirely successful in concealing this fact. A few interesting points emerged, however, thanks to the gentle tact displayed by the actress. The girl was called Sári (she would not reveal her last name), she came of a respectable family and she escaped from school twice a week to attend the matinee performances at the National Theatre.

"Well, did you speak to your Ademar?" asked Camille, amused. "Shall I tell him you want a picture?"

The young face clouded. "No! He is conceited. I don't like him at all!"

"But, child, how can you say such things?" the actress continued in an access of professional loyalty toward a colleague whom she herself did not value too much. "Ademar Kálmán is a great artist."

It was no use. "He struts like a rooster among his hens," was Sári's withering comment. She had done with matinee idols forever. She wished now that she had held on to her violets so as to present them to this lovely lady who was so modest and warmhearted despite her fame. "I like you," she said suddenly, "I like you very much."

"Thank you," Camille answered. "How old are you?"
"Fifteen."

"Well, Sári, I am not too many years older. Perhaps we can be friends."

With this the actress held out her hand and the young girl clasped it with intensity. A moment later a clamor was set up outside the door where Camille's admirers waited with impatience. But they were due for a disappointment. Through a rear stairway the actress and her visitor fled to the street, where a waiting carriage spirited them off to the Erzsébet Körut. Here Vilma had set up the tea table with *Streuselkuchen*, *Stollen* and other delicacies of the season. Small Anthony sat over his lessons, but jumped up instantly as the fiacre stopped at the door, since Camille's arrival from the theatre was a daily adventure for the boy.

"This is Sári," Camille introduced her young guest to them.

The visit passed a trifle stiffly. For half an hour the strange girl lingered in the household that bespoke the artist life in all its details, from the numerous photographs and programs that dotted the walls to the gewgaws and souvenirs which cluttered every niche and shelf. When she departed Vilma asked, nonplussed: "Whoever can that be?"

"What does it matter?" retorted Camille. "She loves the theatre; I see her in the front row every other day."

For many months thereafter the girl returned, either after school hours or during noon recess, to the house on the Erzsébet Körut. She watched the fitting of Camille's costumes and helped the actress rehearse her lines. Before long Sári had absorbed the air of the theatre so thoroughly that she was genuinely stage-struck, planning to run away from home to join some traveling road show as soon as an opportunity presented itself.

At this point Camille became worried. She did not want to be responsible for such an adventurous decision, particularly since the girl's background remained still a mystery. Arguments followed in which even Vilma's eloquence was enlisted to warn against the pitfalls that beset the career of an actress, but to no avail.

"Camille is happy," Sári replied. "I want to be like Camille!"

There was nothing for it but to trail the venturesome

girl to her school and through devious ways to make contact with her family. In doing so Camille uncovered a startling fact: Sári belonged to the house of Posztl Károly-Nagykárolyi, a name widely known and honored throughout Hungary (the ambitious Count Michael Károlyi was currently embarking on his long political career). For a daughter to play hooky from school seemed bad enough to this haughty and surprised clan, but that she nursed depraved ambitions about becoming an actress was nothing short of scandalous. The family immediately took action.

A trying time followed during which Sári was strictly and carefully guarded. No more clandestine matinees at the National Theatre or band concerts in frivolous Angol Park. The young lady was sternly admonished to mind her lessons and to disengage her fancy from theatrical matters altogether.

Secretly she wrote to Camille, laying bare her outraged soul and passionately denouncing the Fates as well as her own parents for their lack of understanding. Camille grieved over each embittered note, torturing herself with doubt whether she had done wrong in thwarting the ardent girl. Had she not chosen the stage herself? What, then, gave her the right to hamper another who sought the same thrilling goal?

While she was vacillating over the wisdom of offering the girl an experimental part in her next play the tone

of the letters changed. Life, to Sári, was full of surprises! Before her blasted dream of histrionic greatness had completely faded, she was deep in the throes of a new adventure. She had fallen in love with a promising young scientist who had no use at all for the theatre and a very pronounced interest in Sári.

This simplified matters no end. Aided and abetted by an anxious family, marriage plans soon loomed on the horizon. Instead of facing the glare of footlights and the sibilant chatter of a prompter's box, the stage-struck girl walked down a candlelit aisle to speak the sacred vows of wifehood.

"My love for the theatre," she wrote Camille a short time later, "is not dead, even though I chose what now I feel to be a happier fate. But, vicariously, I shall follow your career as though it were mine. And, if it please you, I would have you be godmother to my first girl-child. . . ."

Chapter 17

IMPERIAL ROMANCE

WITH A sigh of relief Camille dismissed this incident from her life and turned to other worries. Vilma was not at all well. A serious intestinal ailment, contracted during the hapless sojourn in Poland, had reached a critical stage. Specialists who were consulted advised an immediate operation, but the complication of a weakened heart made such a drastic step highly precarious. In the end, realizing that her mother had, at best, only a short time to live, Camille decided against the risk of surgical interference which—far from effecting a cure—threatened to snuff out the candle even before its time. Instead, she planned to make the dying woman's span of life as rich and colorful as possible.

It happened that her own greatest triumphs fell into this era of concealed anxiety. Budapest producers outdid

themselves in furnishing stellar rôles which Camille filled with enthusiasm and an unmasked eye to the box office from which must come the money for Vilma's mounting medical bills. Being in excellent voice that year, she played a full season of operettas, among them: *Boccaccio*, *Cloches de Corneville*, *Rip van Winkle*, *Mam'selle Nitouche*, *The Beggar Student*, a Hebrew work named *Sulamith*, and the tender Japanese *Geisha*. In the last of these she scored a particular success due to an accidental circumstance; the chorus at the National Theater was composed of tall and hefty females, ill suited to the portrayal of Nipponese maidens, whereas Camille's petite figure and her mincing steps admirably fitted the sweet and dainty Mimosa.

Drama critics that season were unusually generous with their adjectives. "We are accustomed," wrote the conservative Budapesti *Hirlap*, "to conscientious technical perfection on the part of our Camille. But when this industry—which many of our older divas would do well to emulate—is coupled with the fire and verve shown in last night's performance, the result is unsurpassable. . . ."

Smaller gossip sheets stressed a more frivolous note, laying particular emphasis on Camille's appearance and dress. "She clothes herself," commented the *Kis Posta*, "with originality and daring. Her costumes in *Sans-Gêne* were picturesquely authentic, yet at the same time imbued with that note of chic demanded by our designers of today. It is said that Camille devised each of the creations

she has worn this season, for which we accord her an added round of applause."

Theatre posters employed more condensed phrasing. At the popular Színház she was advertised "the best Chloë of our generation," and the competing Zoltan Thury Drama League listed Camille as "the famous Sanchette, the incomparable Rozsa. . . ."

Scrapbooks were not in vogue during those busy nineties, but Camille nevertheless managed to gather a substantial collection of clippings about her activities. She pasted them on squares of cardboard, to be fastened fan-fashion to the walls of her dressing room for visiting producers to take note. This practice was both simple and time saving; harassed theatrical directors in search of talent browsed quietly among the clippings before arriving at a choice, while Camille cheerfully applied her grease paint and put the curling iron to her hair. More often than not, by the time her toilet was finished the visitor had made up his mind and she was hired for a new and tempting rôle.

There was an annual tour of the provinces, with far Kecskemét as starting point and the theatre-loving city of Pressburg (Bratislava) for a close. In Kecskemét Camille found audiences difficult and unversed in metropolitan ways, since it was strictly a peasant community and the greatest poultry producing center in Hungary. The all-pervading odor of chicken feathers and barnyard muck

filled streets, alleys, taverns, lodging houses and the single frame council hall which had been rigged up as a theatre. But Kecskemét burghers paid so well that they could not be snubbed, and annually the most important road shows hoped for a long-term engagement in the odorous community where the direst deficit could be made up at a single performance, even though the entire cast held its collective nose to do so.

The tour continued in a northward arc, touching Dobsina, Graz and a number of Tyrolean towns before swinging back to Pressburg. At Dobsina a curious annoyance awaited her. The Remenyik house, locked up during the family's absence, had been mutilated by vandals who evidently sought to dig through one of the ancient stone walls. A legend was long current that during the Turkish invasion a vast treasure had been hidden in the enormously thick masonry, which through successive generations tempted gullible citizens to lift their pickaxes and hie to the spot. Periodically the mansion was damaged by these treasure hunts for which there was neither prevention nor cure. To discourage such destruction, as well as to have a private look at the hoard herself, Camille now ordered further excavation round about the property. But nothing came to light. Instead of augmenting her slender finances she found herself obliged to sink the total Kecskemét earnings plus her next month's salary into repairs. The only possible gain to be derived from this experience was

the hope of having achieved a general disillusionment throughout the community over the Remenyik treasure, though even now Camille was none too sure. Fertile Slovak imaginations would really never be at rest until the house itself was razed to the ground.

Since touring in those days was neither hectic nor extensive in scope, Vilma enjoyed this last season to the utmost. Care had been taken not to inform the ailing woman that her time would soon be up. For the rest, she suffered little pain and, since she had always been a good traveler, the frequent changes of scene stimulated and delighted her. Camille saw to it that her mother received every possible attention and comfort, providing also for small Anthony's tutoring while on the road.

At Pressburg the season reached its climax with a prolonged engagement at the Court Theatre where, due to the short distance from Vienna, a select public filled the tiers and boxes. Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his future wife, Countess Sophia Chotek, came here during their secret courtship, since they dared not be seen together in the Emperor's own *Hofburgtheater* on the Ring. The lovers paid little attention to what went on below them on the stage, so wrapped were they in each other, but after the performance their troubled consciences sought atonement by means of lavish gifts; Camille received innumerable floral baskets adorned not by ribbons, as was the fashion, but by many lengths of costliest bro-

cares and satins from which priceless gowns and costumes could be devised. Thus an Imperial Highness and the lady of his choice made up for an understandable failure to applaud at the right places and an occasional lapse into nervous laughter when mirth of any sort was palpably quite wrong.

At other times Archduchess Isabella and her sextet of marriageable daughters descended from the Hradschin Palace in Prague for a round of Pressburg activities, including a visit to the theatre. On such occasions Countess Chotek, who was employed as governess to Isabella's brood, sat meekly in her employer's shadow, while Franz Ferdinand pretended to pay court to the least objectionable of the six homely sisters. Her eyes fixed on the proscenium, old Isabella completely missed the romantic real-life drama that was being enacted under her very nose. While the Archduchess clapped and smiled benignly at professional mimes, the deceptive prince's eyes stole across half a dozen maidenly heads to rest in a passionate stare on his beloved. Everyone knew this. Everyone, that is, except Isabella. When, at the end of the season, the Archduchess rewarded Camille with a beautiful fan of ostrich plumes—"for your continued good work, my child"—the actress was abashed. The fan, everyone in the company agreed, was earned indubitably by Franz Ferdinand!

In addition to the scheduled repertoire there were sev-

eral command performances held in Pressburg at the special request of Prince Eszterházy, who came from his feudal estate at Tata to attend. His particular favorite was *The Tragedy of Man* by Madács, which the nobleman—himself an amateur actor and an ardent devotee of the theatre—witnessed at least three times a season. When unable to see professionals at work, Prince Eszterházy gave his own shows on a makeshift stage at home. Putting grease paint and wigs on his retainers, he coached and drilled them until they went through their paces with creditable ease. Thus Eszterházy's valet was only seldom seen enacting this menial rôle; more often than not he wore the bland disguise of Faust, Cyrano or a brooding Hamlet from the mists of Elsinore, while cooks and scullery maids at Tata were more at home with Falstaff and the Merry Wives than with their pots and pans.

With the command performances the season closed and Camille hoped for a well-earned period of rest. It was not so much the thought of her mother's health as sheer fatigue that caused her at this time to reject the offer of a New York producer, a Mr. Amberg, to star in a Broadway musical. She was too tired, and too ignorant of America as more than a name on a map, to investigate this prospect further.

The Budapest apartment was reopened and a brief period of idleness ensued, during which Camille was able to devote every minute of her time to her loved ones.

Vilma was growing worse, so that all social activities had to be curtailed and finally abandoned. Only the routine contact with Mihály and the theatre personnel remained.

The well-known producer and director, Ferenczy, was forming a special company for a ten-month tour of South America. Camille's name appeared near the top of his tentative list. The contract offered exceptionally generous terms. Would she sign?

This time her judgment was not blurred by either fatigue or naïveté, though Rio de Janeiro seemed no less real than the mythical Broadway. Vilma, according to the latest diagnosis, had only a few weeks to live. If Camille left at this point she was hastening her mother's death, besides abandoning her small brother to an uncertain fate. Without hesitation she declined, whereupon the contract went to the lovely Julia Kopácsy, who scored a great success in Jacques Offenbach's *Beautiful Helena* and later distinguished herself as the first Hungarian actress to invade the United States.

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Chapter 18

VILMA'S DEATH

VILMA survived the following winter, but with the coming of spring her strength gave out. She died on March nineteenth, just as plans for a return to Dobsina had been completed.

For Camille life assumed hereafter a difficult character. While up to now she had been a devoted daughter and a loving sister, the rôle of motherhood had never been assigned to her. From this day on, however, things would be different; Vilma had exacted a sacred promise which Camille dared not forget. Young Anthony's future lay in his sister's hands and Camille knew herself to be responsible for his development.

She hurried to Dobsina for settlement of her small inheritance and also to seek out old Suse, in whose care Anthony could be left while legal matters were unraveled.

Remenyik House, put up at last for sale, must be emptied of all personal documents and belongings. Camille spent days and nights in the attic, sorting books, clothes, linens and knickknacks while a local auctioneer took stock. In rummaging about she came upon several copybooks of finest calligraphy. She marveled at the exquisite handwriting. To whom could it belong? No one she knew produced such beautiful letters, traced in such painstaking lines. Puzzled, she turned back to the front page and discovered her own name. It was incredible! Her handwriting today was nothing but a loose and unintelligible scrawl. But now she remembered. During her first term in drama school someone had told her that people of genius, poets, musicians and artists in general, always signed their names with an illegible flourish. To employ a clear and methodical script was deemed a mark of the commonplace. Well, Camille had never intended to be commonplace. On the heels of this revelation she had studied her own graceful penmanship (acquired through diligent exercise) and arrived at a cool verdict. The calligraphy teachers who had governed her elementary school days had obviously been wrong; because of them she wrote with a flawless and stenciled clarity that lacked all trace of distinction. In fact, it was disgusting. Something must be done, and quickly, if Camille hoped to be numbered among the world's elect. With vicious abandon she thereafter mutilated her own script, distorting it until no hint

of its former perfection remained. In time it became unrecognizable and there were samples which Camille herself could not read. This was marvelous! Externally at least she had attained the hallmark of greatness. . . .

After the inventory had been taken and Remenyik House exchanged owners Camille planned a return to Budapest. But before she made ready to set out she received a telegram from Szidi Rákosi, urging her to leave at once for Paris where the great Réjane required her presence in *L'Enfant Prodigue*. This was a chance that might not come again in an entire lifetime. Every youthful aspirant to dramatic fame dreamed of treading in the shadow of the fabulous French tragedienne.

Camille fought with herself. Was the deathbed promise she had given her mother to be challenged so soon? Had Vilma reached back from the Beyond to put her daughter to the test?

She read Szidi's message again and pondered its full meaning. There was no mention of a long-term contract—only the single engagement which might not call for an absence of more than a week, since Réjane played in repertory at the time and changed rôles thirty times a season. Besides, the French theatre was flourishing and its earnings had become the envy of other lands. Camille, left with her brother's education to provide for, could make good use of some additional cash. Surely Vilma, wherever she might be, could see the reasonableness of that, par-

ticularly in view of the reduced finances she had left her children. In short, Camille wasted no time on further reflection. Leaving Anthony in Suse's care, she wired Szidi an affirmative reply and took the next train to Paris.

The French capital happened to be in mourning for the murdered President Carnot. Funeral decorations still marked the avenues through which the cortège had passed on its way to the burial. In a vast building, opened especially for this purpose, the floral wreaths and tributes from foreign governments were displayed to the public. The costliest piece had come from Belgium—a garland of exquisite blooms intertwined with many yards of priceless Bruxelles lace. For Camille, whose eye always took an intense delight in finery, such waste of beautiful materials was a source of torment. On her way to her modest quarters at the "Hotel d'Espagne et d'Hongrie" her mind was plagued with tantalizing visions of the *grandes toilettes* that might be devised with the gorgeous frills that poor Monsieur Carnot would certainly not be able to use.

L'Enfant Prodigue was a brilliant success. So warm was the public's reception that Réjane upset her schedule and allowed the hit to run for a whole month. During this time Camille not only steeped herself in the mysteries of the French theatre but all her free hours were devoted to the exploration of Paris itself. Escorted by colleagues as well as an assortment of fashionable stage-door Johnnies, she made the rounds of Montmartre and the Latin

quarter. On days when there were no matinees to play she visited the Opera, the Odéon, the Ambassadeur and the Alcazar d'Été. Late evenings were given over to more exotic entertainment at the Moulin Rouge where partially disrobed ladies performed the naughty *cancan* or the even less polite *danse de ventre*.

It was all a trifle shocking and Camille blushed at realization of her growing sophistication. Her private life, despite the years she had already spent on the stage, had been singularly sheltered and domestic. In the past the watchful Vilma had waited after each performance to snatch her child away from glitter and temptation into the safe harbor of home. Though twice married, Camille had known as little independence as a girl fresh out of a convent.

Her ignorance made itself known in innumerable ways. There was for example the matter of a personal maid. In France every self-respecting actress, not to say chorus girl, had her dressing-room attendant in lacy cap and apron (even if a younger sister must be disguised to play the part). Camille, accustomed to the ministrations of her ever-present mother, had given no thought to this requisite. Paris soon taught her an embarrassing lesson, for, on ringing the service bell of her hotel room for a female helper to button up the back of her dress, she discovered that the establishment employed only men. Not that the nimble garçons were not willing and able to meet any



Gutkas, Koritniza

Anthony, Camille and their mother at Koritniza on the Polish border

emergency; they were experts at pulling corset strings and garroting women's diaphragms into the elegant wasp waists of the day. But Camille was not entirely prepared to accept such aid. Instead she promptly called up an employment agency and obtained a proper ladies' maid.

In all, the Paris sojourn proved eminently successful and it was followed by an equally profitable aftermath. A provincial theatre in Monaco invited Camille for a series of engagements at San Remo, Mentone, Villefranche and Monte Carlo. Having already become adjusted to her separation from Anthony, she took this offer in her stride and set out for the Riviera. This tour included also a command performance at Nice and Cap Martin, where the aging Empress Eugénie spent her declining years.

At Monte Carlo, in the old *Théâtre Royale*, Camille repeated her *Geisha* success. She also visited the Casino and there crossed paths with a remote and somewhat eccentric cousin named Ernestine von Madarasz, who was a poetess and novelist of some repute as well as an inveterate gambler. The green tables of Monaco exerted an irresistible pull on Ernestine, so that she betook herself to the Riviera whenever her prolific pen could sway editors into furnishing the needful cash.

"Sit down," she greeted Camille, "and take some counters. I saw a white horse today—that means good luck!"

"I dropped my fork at dinner," replied Camille quickly;

"that means bad luck. . . ." She was too awed by the notorious gambling den with its record of human misery and suicide to venture farther into its jaws. Besides, her prolonged absence from Anthony's side could be warranted only by her return to Hungary with a respectable nest egg to show for her pains. She did not intend to toss away her well-earned francs on a rash bet.

"As you like," shrugged Ernestine, losing all interest in their meeting. Her eyes had narrowed as she fixed a steady gaze on the whirling wheel.

Camille looked on a moment longer, noting that her cousin wore the same outmoded and unstylish clothes that characterized her at home. Only unimportant people paid attention to fashion, maintained Ernestine. Great minds rose above such trivia.

From Monaco the journey homeward beckoned. Released at last from her strict routine of nightly performances (followed often by late rehearsals) Camille was able to indulge in some sight-seeing along the way. Cannes, with its kaleidoscope of international society; the Isle Sainte Marguérite, where once languished the Man in the Iron Mask; Milan and its glorious Gothic cathedral; the strangely moving tombs of Genoa; Verona and its palaces; the famous Lido—all these fired her imagination and stored up infinite treasures of memory that would endure through years to come. In Venice the world-renowned canals reeked of garlic and other flotsam, through which

honeymooning tourists bobbed in gondolas with operatic skippers at the prow. For good or ill, all gondolieri sang in the fond hope that some capitalist impresario, preferably from London's Covent Garden or the Metropolitan in New York, would "discover" and lift them from obscurity.

At last came Trieste, the port through which one entered Austria. Here stood Castle Miramare, where Maximilian of Hapsburg and his bride, Charlotte of Belgium, had spent the early years of their married life before venturing forth to their phantom empire in distant Mexico. Camille regarded the marble palace with special curiosity, for she had recently heard that her friend Sári (once bent on theatrical laurels) had departed overseas with her family, charged with an imperial mission—to bring back the Maximilian gems to Europe.

Sári was leading a full life. She had given birth to five children, the youngest being the desired daughter whose godmother Camille had promised to be. The small girl, named Bertita Carla Camille, romped now under a tropic sky and chattered in Spanish—a tongue which her godmother, though an accomplished linguist, had never heard.

It was almost Christmas when Camille at last returned. Dobsina lay blanketed in snow and the small house where Suse dwelt with Anthony peeped sleepily through the high drifts of white. Within, all was well, except that Anthony looked peaked and extraordinarily thin.

"Homesickness," Suse explained. "With you away, I could hardly get him to eat."

The servant's truthfulness could not be doubted. Recalling her own childhood, Camille knew that Suse did not stint with food; on the contrary, it was her practice to fill her charges until they groaned. If Anthony had lost weight it was not due to lack of sustenance but to some peculiarity in his mental make-up.

For the first time Camille studied her brother's personality. Up to now she had showered him with affection, yet at the same time taken him entirely for granted. The child's guidance, his health and spiritual development, had all been safely watched over by Vilma's tender eye. But today, with Vilma gone, matters were different. Anthony ceased to be a toy for his big sister to play with; he had become a responsibility.

Without further delay Camille packed up the boy's effects and moved him to her comfortable flat in Budapest. Here, under her constant supervision, the nervous child's appetite returned. Happy once more, and relieved of the loneliness which a hired servant had been unable to banish, the sensitive lad grew ruddy and strong.

Since he was precocious, the question of proper schooling came now to the fore. At ten years of age Anthony had left elementary grades behind. In Dobsina, despite his puny build, he had already attended the *Realgymnasium*, where he had rendered surprising account of himself.

if the boy was unusually bright (as he seemed to be) he must have special academic advantages. Well, he would get them. Furthermore, if prolonged separations from her disturbed his emotional balance to the point of injuring his health, there would be no more separations. She would adjust her own career to fit his needs.

In coming to this decision she of course did not even remotely contemplate actual abandonment of her professional life. After all, money would be needed to provide Anthony with the kind of education that his talents called for, and Camille's well-established career remained the only source of revenue. No, she dared not give it up. But she would arrange and contrive all future engagements with her brother's welfare always in mind; she would accept only long-term contracts in cities where educational facilities left nothing to be desired. This eliminated all barnstorming tours with one-night stands.

Luck played into her hand as, for the next three seasons, she was again called to the Pressburg Court Theatre. Here Anthony enjoyed the best of academic advantages while Camille herself was able to repeat her former triumphs and to win new laurels. She played in *Die Fledermaus* and *Madame Sans-Gêne*, followed by *Geisha*, *Pouppée*, and a revival of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Her private life became now a paradox. No longer attended by the constant shadow of her duenna-like mother, whose presence she still missed, Camille found herself eagerly sought by male admirers on adventure bent. An

aged bachelor, Count Almásy, drove up daily in his carriage-and-four, waving a bouquet of periwinkles and bursting into song: "Hear me, my small violet . . ." Again, the adjutant of the Archduke Friedrich, whose regiment happened to be currently stationed in Pressburg, brought a discreet billet-doux from his master, requesting a clandestine supper party. Since the Archduke's wife, Isabella, and her famous sextet of daughters, continued to patronize the theatre with inveterate punctuality, Camille thought this approach a particularly distasteful affront. But other and more flattering admirers came, among them a young physician, Dr. Cornelius Lang, son of a cabinet minister, who proposed marriage. Similarly two lieutenants named Friedlander and Fekete made known their honorable intentions, imploring Camille to receive them in her home. This she would not consent to do. Anthony's schedule and his rest must not be disrupted by after-theatre carousals that lasted traditionally into the wee hours of morning.

Her stubborn stand in this respect gave rise to a sudden and unpleasant rumor. Who was this boy that took up so much of her time? Was he Camille's own child, the fruit of some illicit love? The tongues of jealous rivals began to wag. Like Eleonora Duse, Camille had probably some secret d'Annunzio with whom she kept a permanent tryst!

When the first hint of this evil gossip reached her ears Camille's peace was shattered. She did not know how to fight the disembodied demons of calumny and innuendo.

But something must be done before the false taint clung to her skirts forever. Unable to avail herself of more direct weapons, she took refuge in a subtle maneuver. Daily, in full view of the Pressburg public, she appeared with Anthony in her company. The lad was now in his teens and he had shot up fast; he towered beside his dainty sister, not like a younger, but—unless his childlike face were taken into account—like an older brother! Camille's own enduring characteristic of appearing at least a decade younger than her age had wrought the miracle. She could afford to show him off—this "little brother"! On seeing them together no one would dare even to whisper that the perennially girlish Camillushka could have so tall a son.

Oddly, at this time Ferdinand Zhaniel made his reappearance on the scene. He had risen to the rank of colonel of the Emperor's crack guards. Though out of touch with his divorced wife, he followed her career from afar and accidentally heard of her Pressburg plight. If he was otherwise devoid of lovable qualities, Zhaniel had always been possessed of an intrinsic and undaunted gallantry. It caused him now to rally to Camille's side.

He did nothing spectacular. At the height of the unavowed scandal he simply appeared in Pressburg and attended the theatre. Innumerable regimental comrades (whom he knew, or else pretended to know, by sight) were in the audience. He engaged in casual conversation with them, regardless of their rank as non-coms, officers or members of the landed gentry. Even more casually he

mentioned having once had the honor of being the husband of the show's popular leading lady, "when," he added with succinctness, "her brother Anthony was still cutting his teeth." This gesture, in a day when women of the theatre were fair game for every form of insult, silenced all murmurs. More than that, it lent a special glow to Camille's name, since only an exceptionally worthy woman would receive so rare a tribute at the hands of a discarded husband.

That evening, after the play, a basket of Maréchal Niel roses was delivered at the door of Camille's dressing room. A card, tucked under the leaves, bore the name of Ferdinand Zhaniel. It also carried a startling message:

"Through an error of the courts the final decree of our divorce was never granted. Before taking any steps I shall await your wishes in the matter."

The revelation came as a shock. She was still married, and Zhaniel obviously wanted to open the way for a reconciliation. The thought confused and bewildered her, for she had mapped out her life without further thought of wedlock.

In fairness to Zhaniel, however, she realized that a hasty answer would be out of place. She sent him a warm note of gratitude and begged for a year's time in which to consider the situation.

Highly elated, Zhaniel returned that night to Vienna.

Chapter 19

PRESSBURG

CAMILLE'S third season in Pressburg proved the most satisfying of all. The great Austrian actors, Josef Kainz and Alexander Girardi, were guest artists that year, and not in a lifetime would she forget having stood on the same boards with them. Kainz, master of tragedy, was much spoken of because of his past friendships with Wagner and the mad King of Bavaria, Ludwig II. Girardi, on the other hand, was one of the most finished comedians of his day, particularly beloved for his portrayal of the vagabond in *Der Bettelstudent* (*The Beggar Student*). To balance this Germanic element the Hungarian nightingale, Marishka Komáromi, arrived for several engagements, and the one-handed pianist-composer, Count Geza Zichy, chose Pressburg for the Austrian première of his opera, *Roland Mester*.

It was Anthony's education that brought about a change. He had outgrown the provincial preparatory schools and was ready, at fifteen, for advanced study in his favorite field, technology. In some inexplicable way, as though to counteract the overwhelmingly artistic strain that ran through his nearest of kin, the boy's inclinations were strictly scientific.

Camille was awed and fascinated by this turn in his development. She, who had neither the patience nor the pedantry to add up a grocery bill, marveled at his easy familiarity with slide rules, formulae and logarithms. To "emote," to dance, to sing and recite merry lines that made people clap their hands, was after all a primitive accomplishment; it seemed to Camille that she had been born with it, and that, therefore, it was not to be put in a class with the career that Anthony would one day carve for himself. Anthony had an extraordinary brain. His teachers and fellow students paid lavish tribute to his brilliance, so that no one could doubt the promising future that awaited him.

As a springboard for his scientific career the youthful Anthony had been referred to a German university, the Charlottenburg Institute of Technology in Berlin. Here his gifts were to unfold under the most expert tutelage.

Camille was all agog. They most certainly would move to Berlin! To be sure, this called for stringent financial sacrifices on her part, but she would make them willingly,

nay, enthusiastically. Besides, several German agents had for years hoped to lure her northward to the Prussian capital. She had always refused, fearing that her Danube heart would find it difficult to beat in time with the "Watch on the Rhine." But now things were different. For Anthony's sake she would go to the Congo, the Amazon, Punta Arenas, even Berlin. . . .

She searched among her papers and found the address of one of the agents who had pestered her some moons ago. He represented the *Operetten-theater* in the Alte Jakobstrasse where, Camille remembered, her compatriot Ferenczy was currently employed as production head. She promptly tossed away the agent's name and wrote to Ferenczy direct. The reply came by return mail, together with a contract and the score of the comedy *Fifi*; her part was already marked in the libretto and Ferenczy urged that she start memorizing at once, so that rehearsals might begin immediately on her arrival.

This meant farewell to Pressburg and the *Kraxlhuber*, or "mountain goats," as the merry citizens of that town were called. The Court Theatre, the press and the leading families in the community gave three successive receptions in honor of their departing star. On leaving, Camille knew that it might never again be her lot to duplicate the triumphs she had known on this magnificent provincial stage. Years later, when she returned for a guest performance, the papers would write: "We have a beloved artist

in our midst." And when she appeared in the theatre the audience would rise *en masse* to give her an ovation.

But her heart was now set on Berlin and on Anthony's future. The trunks were packed and the northward journey began, leading through Bohemia and the famous resort of Karlsbad, where thousands of pilgrims flocked each year to take the cure. Camille's vibrant zest for life, no less than her insatiable curiosity, caused an interruption of the journey to investigate. One could not possibly pass up a noteworthy spot like Karlsbad! While strolling through the *Kurhaus* and the park with its medicinal springs she even struck up an acquaintance with the resident physician, Dr. Kálmán Toth, who evidently was in a world-weary mood. For, as Camille bubbled amiably about the wonders of this spa and its healing waters, Dr. Toth turned on her suddenly.

"Rubbish!" he snapped. "If people stayed at home and took a dose of salts, they'd be just as well off." Then, remembering that this was not precisely the kind of advertising for which the management paid him a salary, he reddened and wandered quickly away.

From Karlsbad a convenient detour led through Bavaria to the illustrious Wagner city of Bayreuth. Here Camille and Anthony attended a performance of *Parsifal*, after which they visited the composer's home (currently occupied by his son Siegfried). It required only a cursory inspection of the master's study and workshop to realize

that the notorious "Wagner cult" had been nurtured by the great Richard himself. Rembrandt could not have strutted before his easel in more damatic posturings than Wagner when he set about courting the Muse. At the break of day the great composer invariably costumed himself like a character out of *Die Meistersinger*; he wore lace cuffs, a cape and a beret. If people came to call, he donned an extra collar of velvet and gold braid, while a servant brushed and perfumed his flowing locks. Throughout this time the visitors waited in an anteroom until Wagner approached, like royalty, flinging double doors wide before him.

On one occasion Alexandre Dumas, *fils*, came to Bayreuth and was received by the master in the above fashion. Thinking it all a joke, the Frenchman laughed heartily and proceeded to confess his own ignorance of opera, which he defined as "the most expensive of noises." But his pleasantries were received with such stony rebuke that he went home to pen a scathing commentary on "Wagnerian din—inspired by rioting cats that scamper in the dark about an ironmonger's shop." Some time later, during a Paris sojourn, Wagner returned the Dumas visit. He was kept waiting for half an hour in the vestibule, before the author of *The Three Musketeers* marched in, superbly attired in a plumed helmet, a cork life belt and a flowered Japanese dressing gown. "I hope you will forgive my working dress," he said with majesty, "but half my ideas

are lodged in this helmet and the remainder in a pair of wool socks I put on to compose love scenes. . . ."

While paying her respects to the gaunt Cosima, Wagner's widow, Camille began to sense the difference between the Austrian character and the German. It was largely a matter of humor—and the lack of it. She had better leave her light Danube heart behind, if she would get on in Berlin.

During the remainder of the trip brother and sister gave up sight-seeing, while Camille concentrated strictly on her rôle in *Fifi*. She had the part completely memorized when the train pulled into the Berlin station.

Life in the German capital proved rather difficult at first, due not only to the terrific pace of the great city (Berlin was growing at a fast rate) but also because of the unsentimental and almost curt manner of its inhabitants. People did not make friends here with the warmth and the abandon that characterized Vienna or Budapest. Nordic restraint and caution raised a wall against the helpless foreigner who was everywhere regarded as a suspicious intruder. The Austrian proverb, "Think well of a stranger until he teaches you otherwise," seemed here to have been reversed.

But Camille did not let this daunt her. First she reported at the Jakobstrasse and obtained the complete schedule of rehearsals. Next, Anthony must be enrolled at the Institute. This necessitated a long ride by tram to Charlotten-

burg on the edge of the Grunewald forest, one of the city's show spots. At the Institute Anthony's application met with a startling response. In the scientific field, stated the registrar, prodigies were not welcome; the college was most unwilling to accept a student of Anthony's youth, regardless of his qualifications. But, since a year of practical experience would be needed at the end of any engineering or chemical course, the boy could well spend the next twelve months as an apprentice in the proper factory, thereby eliminating this requisite later on. Several faculty members were consulted and Anthony received a reference to the experimental laboratories of Berlin's new automobile plant at Weissensee, owned by the industrialist, Otto Weiss. Here he was privileged to witness and, in an infinitesimal manner, to take part in the construction of Germany's first horseless carriage. It was a propitious era for a boy, this awakening of the machine age! To Anthony the mechanical millennium had come.

Camille, meanwhile, won favorable notices at the hand of Berlin's hard-boiled critics. Her Magyar accent lent an exotic note to the characterization of *Fifi* and gave both humor and additional lightness to the piece. *Fifi* was followed by another success, Dani Gürtler's *Vogelhochzeit* as well as—again—*Geisha*, of which she was growing very tired. At the end of the season she could look back on work well done and on a handsome profit in gleaming Reichsmark.

Since Berlin summers were quite hot, a general exodus to the North and Baltic Seas took place each year. Camille and Anthony followed the trend, not knowing what else to do, and took a holiday excursion to the lovely resort of Swinemünde, not far from Heringsdorf where the German Crown Prince and his family spent the warm months. The Kaiser himself cruised energetically through Baltic waters, often anchoring his yacht, the *Hohenzollern*, off shore. At night the royal pleasure boat was brightly lighted and people gathered on the piers to hear the ship's orchestra play. Quite often Wilhelm II, in a sprightly mood, borrowed the band leader's baton and directed the orchestra throughout the evening, bowing at the end of each number and garnering his applause. The next day, while His Majesty slept, visitors were quietly shown about the boat in a detailed inspection tour.

The year was 1905, with the Tsar enmeshed in the Russo-Japanese War. Destroyers and dreadnaughts filed in a long chain through the Baltic into the North Sea and the Atlantic, on the desolate voyage around Africa that would end, off Japan, in the dismal naval battle of Tsushima. Here the wily Admiral Togo, Oriental in every thought and gesture, waited comfortably for an enemy already beaten by disease, starvation and the horrible rigors of that insane argosy.

The *Svetlana*, one of the doomed ships, paused briefly in the harbor of Swinemünde to raise its standard in salute,

while a balalaika band answered the Kaiser's philharmonic endeavors with a joyous rendering of the Muscovite national anthem. For Camille, who adored such goings on, that Baltic summer would remain an unforgettable adventure.

Autumn came and with it Anthony's education once more became a paramount issue. Herr Weiss, in whose employment the youth had made excellent progress, showed keen interest in the case of this unusual apprentice. He paid Camille a visit and offered her some sound advice. The Berlin technological institutions were very good, he confided, but not perfect.

"Perfect," Herr Weiss declared with emphasis, "is the Technikum Mittweida in Saxony!"

Coming from so signal an authority as Germany's first and only manufacturer of automobiles, the words were heeded. Camille missed several rehearsals in order to accompany the boy to Mittweida and to see him safely lodged in a students' rooming house. Once he had been enrolled at the famous college and wore the characteristic white and black fraternity cap which, at the recommendation of Herr Weiss, was promptly forthcoming, Camille returned to Berlin for the resumption of her duties.

She played throughout that winter in a set of new rôles—Paul Lincke's *Glow-worm*, Offenbach's *Helena*, and the lead in a hybrid Spanish musical comedy called *Toledad*. Though she herself thought little of her vocal

accomplishments, apparently Berlin audiences differed, for she was cast in one singing part after another. The limitations of her register were compensated by an unfailing warmth and vivacity of expression; Camille did nothing half-heartedly. She threw herself, body and soul, into each task, however big or small.

For the second time in her life she was completely alone in a great and picturesque city. But, as in Paris, she was not alone for long. A Persian prince named Allah Melik Khan became enamored of her and set himself resolutely on her trail. He was particularly entranced with Camille's ample curves, for he had the voluptuous tastes of the Orient. At sight of her round hips and opulent bosom his eyes bulged in unabashed delight. "So much meat!" he exclaimed. "Ah, so much soft, white meat!" Nor were his appetites confined to the erotic, for the Khan was a prodigious eater. Like his master, the Shah Nazr-ed-Din, who during a visit abroad found European menus so skimpy that he ordered a sheep slaughtered and roasted in his hotel bedroom, Allah Melik could never get enough to eat. Even after state banquets, to which he was often invited, the gentleman from Iran took home a rack of lamb to broil over a portable grill which he kept in his suite at the Adlon.

To Camille the Khan's attentions were a source of considerable anxiety. She never knew when her admirer's two appetites might become confused and he would take

a bite out of her. She spent the balance of that season in fear and trembling.

Apart from his more voracious qualities the Khan had also a gentler virtue. He sang. The songs he loved to render in a loud and ear-splitting wail were ancient lays of Persia, Turkey and Armenia. They were unintelligible and dolorous in the extreme. Yet often, to deflect the focus of his too enamored eyes, Camille rushed to the piano and entreated His Mohammedan Highness for a number—and then Cupid himself was slain by an arrow of song. For, once his throat had been cleared, the Khan could not be stopped until he had gone through his repertoire and dropped in stupor on the nearest couch. No other joy, sensual or gastronomic, equaled his passion for music. It was this passion which in the end proved Camille's salvation because the constant din of his own heartbreaking melodies finally gave the singer a violent case of homesickness. Having dwelt melodiously and in a vibrant tremolo on the excruciating beauties of his native land, Allah Melik, Servant of the Prophet, gave in to his nostalgia. Out of politeness, though in a decidedly perfunctory manner, he asked Camille to marry him. When she refused (with equal courtesy) he shed no tear. He packed his trunks, turbans and roasting oven, and set out for the East.

Camille, meanwhile, studied her figure in a mirror. "I think," she told herself, "that I shall go on a diet."

Chapter 20

FAREWELL TO FOOTLIGHTS

ANTHONY'S years at Mittweida were uneventful from the standpoint of outward activities. As had been predicted by Herr Weiss, the *Technikum* offered a course of exceptional merit and profundity, so that only a student capable of pronounced application could meet its rigorous demands.

Anthony was such a student. In contrast to his sister's hearty extrovert nature, he loved loneliness and introspection. The customary sports, drinking bouts, duels and romantic entanglements that characterized German university towns left him quite cold. Occasionally, to keep up appearances, he attended a "beer evening" with his fraternity brothers and joined in the *Salamander* by rubbing his stein on the table. But this was rare indeed. Anthony had only one absorbing interest—books.

When summer came, Camille had difficulty in luring

him away on holiday; he wanted to remain in Mittweida, tutoring students older than himself who had been backward in their work. At last he agreed to a short vacation in the not too distant pine woods of Thuringia, choosing Ilmenau as a stopping place because Goethe spent thirty-five summers there.

This respite from the academic life was too short to prove beneficial; but, coupled with his zeal for study, Anthony had a driving force that bordered on stubbornness. He was determined one day to make his mark in the world and to accomplish great things. The only way to greatness was sustained effort; therefore he would not allow himself to be interrupted. He could do without playtime. Civilization's most outstanding men were neither weaklings nor procrastinators, but staunch individuals who stuck to the task they set themselves.

Camille began to learn something about this little brother who had grown to such serious stature. While she had entered her thirties with all the capricious verve and elasticity that had been hers in childhood, Anthony had a rigidity of purpose she had never known. Whereas her career had taken shape haphazardly, almost accidentally, carried along by the natural ebullience of her spirit, his goal lay clearly and sharply ahead. She had danced along, taking a false step now and then, but prancing gaily on for good or ill. Anthony was making up his mind about good or ill. He planned to make a different start and to

hew straight to the line. No false step. At least, not any that did not ultimately bring him nearer the goal.

During the next two years at Mittweida she saw very little of him. Her own work in Berlin kept her quite busy and, besides, he had requested that she leave him as much free time as possible for special studies in electro-engineering which he had taken up.

It was not until the last year of his course that she was suddenly summoned to Mittweida. Anthony had suffered a nervous breakdown and he was threatened with pneumonia, as well as a form of brain fever, due to overwork. Excessive virtue and excessive vice exact an equal penalty; the scholar pays as dearly for his passion as the libertine or the wastrel.

In order to be at her brother's side, Camille was forced to cancel the remainder of her season with Ferenczy. As she did so, a grave resolution began to take shape in her heart. From Anthony's former tutors, his fellow students and his current professors at Mittweida she had learned that the boy showed all the marks of a rare genius. Was it not then her sacred duty to nurture him and watch over his physical well-being, in order to let the growing mind flower to full perfection? Already this terrible illness proved that he would not take proper care of himself; his thoughts dwelt on higher things that had nothing to do with body comforts. In short, she must give up her own career and devote her entire time to Anthony.

For the rest of that winter she nursed him back to health. Then, because he insisted on taking his examinations despite the time he had missed, she leased a furnished flat in Mittweida and kept house for her brother until the strenuous period was over.

Anthony passed his examinations with flying colors. At eighteen, the age at which average students entered the Technikum, he was graduated with highest honors and commended for further study toward a doctor's degree. He received this idea with enthusiasm and signed his name immediately on the enrollment list for postgraduate work, but at this point Camille put her foot down. Anthony was physically drained and in no shape to continue his scholastic orgy. On the contrary, it was high time that he took his nose out of books and smelled some country air.

Some weeks before, she had received a letter from Irène Csiszér von Szent Királyi (sister of the handsome actor by that name, whom Sári had worshiped from afar). Irène had a small summer villa on Lake Balaton, which she could not enjoy unless it were full of guests. "I know nothing more desolate than a lake cottage," she wrote; "please come and help me endure mine."

This was a welcome offer indeed. Camille accepted with alacrity and relief, for she had been hard put in her efforts to wean Anthony from his doctorate. After some days of heated protest and argument, in which her histrionic practice enabled her to outtalk and leave him far be-

hind, Camille won. July found brother and sister comfortably established at the sunny Hungarian resort.

If Camille and Irène supposed, however, that Anthony would take a rest cure on the sandy beach of Balaton, they were sadly mistaken. The balmy breezes, the blue sky and the actinic rays pouring down from a well-meaning sun, all combined to stimulate the boy to action. There was no holding him. He splashed in the water, pranced along the shore and, finally, longing for something vital to do, decided to build a boat.

"They already have a row boat," Camille told him gently, pointing out that Irène and her other guests took daily rides in what appeared to be a seaworthy launch.

Anthony's reply was prefaced by a withering look. "I have in mind a cabin ship," he answered.

And he built his cabin boat. That same week wood was delivered that had been cut to scale at a Budapest lumber yard, and on its arrival was promptly dropped into the lake for soaking. With the aid of a local carpenter's tools and a blacksmith's anvil Anthony set to work shaping the hull. Two thousand bolts were driven into the body and strips of iron lined the seams. An air-cooled motor, constructed according to specifications at near-by Székesfehérvár, filled the "ship's" bowels. The mounting of the deck, cabin and propeller seemed mere child's play after the foundation had been finished. By this time not only Camille, but Irène, her guests, the nearest neighbors and

excited visitors from Balatonfüred, Tihány and Almády, all wanted to take a hand in the proceedings. Camille herself sewed busily on an awning for the afterdeck, while Irène made curtains, as well as table and chair covers for the cabin.

At last the work was done and a date could be set for the launching, when the boat would receive the name *Ancamire* (formed by the combined first syllables of her three "builders' " names). And now there was nothing left to do but to hope that the marvelous creation would not only float but be capable of steering under her own power.

The launching took place late in September amid crowds of spectators from far and wide. Many a doubting Thomas stood along the shore shaking his head derisively and prophesying the worst.

"Instead of a launching, it'll be a sinking. That's what it'll be!"

But to the wonder of all, the *Ancamire* proved herself as seaworthy as the princeliest of yachts. True, her lines were a trifle clumsy and her toot was unprofessional, but for comfort and steadiness she could not be matched. The motor worked flawlessly and aroused the envy of the sailboats round about.

There was only one minor flaw in the happy scheme. The *Ancamire* had taken all summer to build and her launching coincided with the closing of the bathing sea-

son. The lake, known in song and legend as *Hullamzo Balaton* (Stormy Balaton), was the most treacherous of inland seas. With the approach of fall great tempests rose suddenly on the waters, shattering all craft that did not lie safely anchored. Since the small fishing villages that dotted the shore recorded an annual loss of life from carelessness and disregard of danger, the authorities fixed a closing date, after which the waters were declared unnavigable. This date, it so happened, fell on the *Ancamire's* début. As soon as the proud cabin boat had made her initial splash she was towed in again and confined to drydock. The summer was over.

Anthony did not take this to heart. He had enjoyed himself enormously while building the craft and he was not at all certain that the sailing of the *Ancamire* would be half so thrilling as her creation. Besides, another idea was already brewing in his head. He became restive and eager to return to Germany.

"We can go boating next year," he said cheerfully, bidding the Balaton good-by.

Since Anthony had not had a single day's rest throughout their Hungarian holiday, Camille vetoed a resumption of the Mittweida life. Instead of returning to the university she persuaded her brother to join her in Berlin, where she might be able to fill an occasional theatrical engagement and to restore the family's financial equilibrium, somewhat jolted by the boat-building escapade. Anthony

could meanwhile present himself at the Weissensee plant, where his former employer had long ago promised him a job as technical consultant.

This plan was to be carried out when, arrived in Berlin, Anthony became sidetracked by two extraordinary men with whom he was thrown into professional contact. One was an old professor, Karl Spannagel, who had made a name for himself in the world of music (he played the piano, composed and devised several modern improvements on musical instruments). The other, Hans Miko-ray, headed the well-known firm of Minimax, manufacturing fire-extinguishers. Both men had a fine scorn for what is termed a one-track mind, and, in order to escape this opprobrium, had branched out into alien pastures, with equally dismal results. On a concert trip to London, Spannagel had tasted English orange marmalade. Its nippy flavor pleased him immensely. On returning home he wondered whether German burghers or, indeed, Continental Europeans in general, realized what they were missing. Before waiting to find out, he ordered oranges, recipes and proper utensils from abroad and set up a small factory where his beloved marmalade soon bubbled by the gallon. But when the golden product was sealed in jars, labeled and offered for sale, Professor Spannagel discovered that he had no market. People were unacquainted with the stuff and would not buy it. As a result the unhappy professor was left with fifteen hundred jam pots in

is cellar which, through the passing years, he manfully trove to empty by himself. . . .

Hans Mikoray's fling into the experimental world was of a different nature. Though eminently successful with his Minimax spray, which had lately been turned to a new use by replacing paint brushes in the finishing of carriages, trams and ocean liners, he longed for further fields to conquer. In America a wizard named Edison had just perfected his phonograph. On this principle Mikoray devised a system of small portable discs to be used in the transmission of greetings, birthday felicitations, personal correspondence and business messages. Writing had become archaic, Mikoray argued; the world of tomorrow would see no more of it. The world of tomorrow would be vocal. It would hear! But alas, nobody fell in with this extraordinary plan. People who were too lazy to take a pen in hand would certainly not catch up with their correspondence by setting up a recording machine and speaking into it.

Thus Mikoray was left with his sample gramophone plates which, on occasion, he played for his friend Spanagel who, in turn, obliged with a crock of slightly milked marmalade. . . . Since both men had been eminently successful in other lines, they could afford such costly vagaries without taking their failure too heavily to heart. This was after all the dawn of a new era, an age of invention, industrialization and progress such as the

world had never seen. Everyone was infected with the spirit of daring that characterized this young twentieth century; men who had harnessed fire, steam and electricity were looking to the air for wings. Failure? It was part of success.

Anthony, too, was infected. In meeting Mikoray and Spannagel he imbibed their irrepressible zest for creative action. Humanity had stood still long enough; it must be jostled now out of its groove. Anthony would be one of the jostlers.

His hobby was electricity. Although he spent his days in the drafting rooms at Weissensee, designing automobiles, at night Anthony was at work transforming his bedroom into an experimental laboratory, with wires, spools, batteries and Leyden jars. Here he puttered and hammered far into the night, exploring the various phases of incandescence, and occasionally raising the roof with a bolt of artificial thunder or lightning.

Since no housemaid could be persuaded to enter that eerie chamber, Camille undertook the dusting of it herself. One morning, while making Anthony's bed, she came too close to a network of live wires that suddenly touched the metal buckle on her belt. There was a crackling sound, as a flood of multicolored sparks danced over her dress. She was terrified, yet at the same time strangely entranced. The shower of sparks reminded her of Titania's costume in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

except that the fairy queen's sequins did not remotely approach the brilliance of the myriad stars that had just drenched her own simple frock.

That evening, when Anthony came home, she told him about it. He was not surprised. "I know," he said calmly. "I've been practicing with those sparks on my bedspread every night."

"Not while you are under it!" she cried in alarm.

"Of course not. I merely want to project them on a large surface so as to test their effectiveness in illuminating great halls and public buildings. When I've got them all going, my room looks very festive."

She paused, then burst out excitedly: "The theatre, Anthony! Think what it might mean to the theatre!"

Even as she spoke he snatched up her belt buckle. "You've given me a new idea!" he exclaimed, holding the buckle aloft. "Show me again what happened this morning."

With some trepidation she followed him upstairs and repeated her earlier movements that had set off the accidental discharge. As the contact was made and a cataract of rainbow sparks shot over her skirts Anthony leaped into the air with glee.

"It didn't kill you!" he shouted. "It can be used on people."

From that time forth he set to work, seeking to perfect the process so as to make it commercially useful. His first dream of creating a new form of Bengal light for gala



The Spectacle Ray in action

illumination at fairs, night parades, charity fêtes, etc., now gave way to a time-saving device for altering stage backgrounds by means of electric beams and floodlights without the need of shifting scenery. In addition, the spontaneous incandescence of dancing costumes (produced by intricate wiring concealed in the dress material) would usher in a glorious era of unimagined theatrical splendor.

It was during this period, in the spring of 1909, that a brief interruption occurred. From faraway Mexico, Sári had sailed for Europe with the children, a governess and a mysterious black trunk. She stopped for a single night in Berlin to call on Camille and Anthony, before journeying on to Vienna to deliver the Maximilian crown jewels into the hands of Emperor Franz Joseph. The gems, Camille learned, were only those pieces which had been originally Hapsburg possessions and which had been taken to Mexico by the unfortunate Archduke Maxl and his wife. Other jewels, given to Carlota or her husband by the Mexican people, were not claimed by Austria and therefore remained overseas (most of them in the National Museum of Mexico City).

The visit was all too short. Camille had scarcely got acquainted with her godchild, a little girl with blonde hair and green eyes, when the hour of parting struck. Accompanied by a secretary of the Austro-Hungarian Embassy, who provided diplomatic immunity against customs inspection on the border, the travelers moved on.

"Come to the Balaton," Anthony called to the children as the train pulled out of the station, "and I'll take you riding in my boat!"

These words were rashly spoken. When summer arrived, Camille and her brother returned to Hungary, where a grim surprise awaited them. The *Ancamire*, safely in drydock for the winter, had become a haven for various animals. Ducks, geese and turtles nested amicably in her bowels, transforming the ship's interior into a graphic Noah's Ark.

"If this were guano," said Anthony philosophically as he shoveled out the dirt, "we would be millionaires."

Since sweeping and scrubbing were not sufficient to banish all odors from the boat, a further drastic step had to be taken: the cabin was sawed off. Thereafter the *Ancamire* dashed breezily about over the foamy waters minus her upper structure. Fortunately for everyone concerned, a letter arrived from Sári, saying that her parents in Budapest could not be induced to part with their grandchildren, and that all hope for a Balaton visit must therefore be abandoned. This saved the *Ancamire* from complete humiliation; Sári and the children would remember her ever after as the fair and lordly yacht that Anthony's words had painted for them.

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Chapter 21

ANTHONY'S SUCCESES

AUTUMN meant work again and Anthony's first application for a patent. In order to obtain this it was necessary to hold a successful demonstration of his "spectacle rays" before a committee of experts. For this purpose the living room of the Berlin flat had to be transformed into a combination laboratory and show-room, with a small dais at one end and the projection machines at the other.

Again Camille served as a technical guinea pig. Clad in an Isadora Duncan gown of metallic threads woven over asbestos, she was able to endure 200,000 volts of alternating current. As the same time a veritable Aurora Borealis trailed across the room and made it appear like an enchanted grotto. Here were operatic possibilities.

"A perfect setting for the Venus Cave in the first act of

Tannhäuser!" Camille extolled. "And Siegfried's dragon, Fafner—how we could make him spit fire!"

The experts were delighted. Among them were such personages as the director of the Technological Institute at Charlottenburg, Dr. Slavik; the secretary of the Society of Electrotechnical Engineers, Herr Detmar; and the leading consultant of the AEG (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft), Dr. Breslauer. Another authority, Hugo Mestern—who, with his colleague, Auer von Welsbach, introduced the first incandescent gas cylinders into America—also put in an appearance. With Mestern came Count Hülsen-Haeseler, general manager of the imperial theatres in Berlin.

It was Hülsen who turned from an admiring spectator into a prospective customer. He wanted the wonder rays for his Shakespeare cycle: the storm in *Julius Caesar*, the eerie night in *King Lear*, the witches' den in *Macbeth*. . . . But the imperial theatres did not own their lighting effects; they rented these from the firm of Schwabe & Co.

"I shall talk with Schwabe," Hülsen said amiably, "and see what we can do."

Some days later (the patent had already been granted) Schwabe came. He was accompanied by several persons of title, so that the porter of the apartment building begged to know if perchance the Emperor himself was expected, in which case he would lay a carpet across the sidewalk. No carpet was needed. But Hülsen's desire to use the rays

at His Majesty's favorite theatre was equivalent to a command. Schwabe stroked his beard.

"I'll buy," he added slowly, "if I can buy outright."

Anthony looked baffled. "You mean—?"

"I mean I want sole rights to the German patent. You are to wash your hands of this, once it is mine."

"But my brother intends to go on with the work," Camille broke in; "he has not exhausted its possibilities."

"There are still the foreign patents," said Schwabe. "He can hold onto them for further experimentation."

This was certainly true. Anthony breathed a sigh of relief and signaled Camille to make no further protest. If Herr Schwabe cared to name his terms, a lawyer would be summoned for the negotiations.

The patent sold for a modest sum—5,000 gold marks—but to Anthony this seemed a fortune. At last he had earned some money of his own that would help finance further experimentations without the necessity of again tapping Camille's savings. Now he could follow up the Berlin success with demonstrations in London, Paris, Brussels and Budapest, so as to be assured of the foreign market in leading European countries. And then—who could tell?—there might be America. . . .

The time was propitious.

In the year 1910 Belgium celebrated her great international exposition, inviting foreign exhibits from all over the world. Anthony immediately wrote for a booth in

which to display his invention, but so many applications had poured in before his own that there was not a chance. Nevertheless, one of the patronesses of the science pavilion, Baroness Hélène de Königswärter, urged disappointed inventors to show their exhibits in various empty storehouses about Brussels. Anthony cheerfully followed this suggestion and his display obtained favorable mention repeatedly in the Belgian press. Baroness de Königswärter herself (a divorced lady with a Lily Langtry figure) visited the storehouses that were under her sponsorship and lingered long in Anthony's booth. But her queenly presence did not distract the young inventor, who had eyes only for his machines. Instead, the Baroness and Camille struck up a warm friendship; they talked of a thousand feminine matters, including the Flemish custom of tying infants between two pillows, papoose-fashion, for the duration of their first year of life, in order to prevent curvature of the spine or bowed legs due to wrong handling and premature walking. It was to this ancient practice that the Baroness attributed her statuesque exterior.

However, except for her pleasant acquaintance, the Belgian visit netted nothing. Anthony's "spectacle ray" attracted lively commentary but no buyers.

Undismayed, brother and sister pinned their hopes on England. They planned, the following spring, to conquer London, where the great Russian dancer Anna Pavlova was dazzling the public with her fabulous ballet. One of

her agents, Mr. Keith (of the theatrical bureau of Keith, Prowse & Co., Ltd.), had made inquiries in Berlin regarding the new lighting effects used at the Imperial *Hof-theater*. Pavlova, it was rumored, had long been looking for something of this sort.

Camille packed trunks. Since Anthony still depended on her for the demonstrations, she naturally must go along. This meant that her hope of getting even part-time work in the theatre would have to be abandoned altogether. The old ties were breaking and soon would be forgotten. But this did not matter half so much as the fact that Anthony was doing important and precedent-shattering things for which he needed her. A hired model would never stand for the shock and fatigue involved in his scientific demonstrations, whereas Camille had boundless energy and no fear—or rather, if doubts crept upon her, she dismissed them.

They went to London in March and, after three weeks of waiting for their luggage which was delayed in the crossing, leased the vacant offices of the old Princess Theatre in Oxford Street. Duse had rehearsed an extraordinary abridgment of *La Dame aux Camélias*, prior to a command performance before Queen Victoria (in 1894) at Windsor Castle. Since Her Majesty would have vetoed any spectacle of even the faintest bawdy implications, the play had been rigorously fumigated. Only the fifth act was deemed acceptable, but even here radical changes

were inserted, including the re-naming of the heroine. In the new version she was Daisy, a young girl of indisputable virtue, whose fiance—Armand—had been sent to India (this flattered Albion and touched Britannia in a vital spot). During his absence, Daisy had pined away and grown tubercular with loneliness, so that, when Armand returned at last to marry her, she died in his arms. It was all extremely pure, and if Duse had not needed the money she would never have lent her name and reputation to so quaint an enterprise.

The England of 1911 still mourned Edward VII, who had died the previous year. Although the official period for the display of *crêpe* lasted only six weeks, many a loyal Briton still wore touches of black, and numerous business firms carried on all correspondence on paper with a funereal border. To Anthony this aura of gloom appeared at first a bad omen; his dismay was further aggravated when Camille inadvertently shocked their landlady by asking her to mail a letter with the postage stamp glued upside down. This, it appeared, was an affront not only to the deceased but to the living king, whose effigy must not be seen in an undignified position.

The Princess Theatre had not been occupied for some time, so that the backstage quarters were filthy beyond description. Fully two weeks were required for the sweeping out of cobwebs, rubbish and old bric-a-brac. It was only after this chore had been disposed of that Anthony

finally set up his apparatus and the demonstrations could begin.

Leading figures of the London theatre promptly responded to the invitations issued by Arthur Collings, a barrister representing Keith and Prowse. Among the eager spectators at Anthony's first display was the actor, Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, brother of the literary Max. The firm of Maskelyne and Devant also sent several prospective clients to attend the demonstration.

At the conclusion of Anthony's performance the guests broke into enthusiastic applause, such was their wonder and delight. But Camille and her brother could not help observing that the sparks seemed far less brilliant than on the Continent; this was due to the moist London atmosphere which dampened the chemicals that had been sprinkled on Camille's dress to create the color effects.

What was to be done? The climax of the London visit, a showing before Pavlova, lay yet ahead. It would not do to risk an imperfect display, for if the famed dancer could be dazzled and induced to purchase even temporary rights to Anthony's invention his fortune was made. Pavlova's world-wide tours would spread his name to the far corners of the earth.

After the spectators had left, he set to work once more, passing the night in feverish experimentation. By morning he arrived at a somewhat equivocal solution, namely,

that the sparks would increase in brilliance if the voltage were stepped up, which at the same time vastly enhanced the danger of electrocution. It therefore became necessary to devise some measure for Camille's protection.

At last the important hour came, when Anna Pavlova deigned to appear in the cold offices of the Princess Theatre. In the company of Mr. Keith the pale and aristocratic-looking ballerina seated herself before the platform on which Anthony and Camille puttered in breathless excitement. Now everything seemed to be in readiness. Still, in order to put on a perfect show, Anthony continued making last-minute experiments to overcome the dampening effect of that Channel fog. To keep Camille from being toasted alive, he placed a veil of spun gold and asbestos over her head so that she looked like a harem favorite of the Begum of Nepal. She varied this with a wide-brimmed but equally draped picture hat.

The demonstration proved highly successful. Thanks to the added electrical charge, Anthony's batteries crackled and sent forth such an array of rainbow hues that the dank chamber behind the Princess Theatre stage was transformed into a scene out of the *Arabian Nights*.

"Beautiful!" cried Pavlova in ecstasy. "Marvelous! I must have it at once . . ."

But even as she clapped her hands, her face suddenly changed expression. She drew nearer to Camille and intently studied the details of her costume.

"That heavy thing across the face," she said, "I do not like it. Will madame please take it off?"

"Impossible," said Anthony with scientific calm. He then proceeded to enlighten the ignorant visitor. "Without that veil madame would be electrocuted."

Pavlova emitted a little scream.

"He means," Camille interpolated quickly, "that my face would be burned."

This hardly improved matters as far as the great Russian was concerned. "To dance, I need a face," she remarked pointedly.

At this stage in the proceedings Anthony burst into happy laughter. The present demonstration, he explained, had required an exceptionally high voltage. But the process already used in Berlin was far less dangerous and necessitated no veil at all.

"But the dress, it is still asbestos?" asked the dancer suspiciously.

Yes, admitted Anthony, crestfallen. The dress, it was still asbestos.

This settled the matter. Pavlova stalked from the room and went off on the arm of a disgruntled Mr. Keith. She would dance, the magnificent Anna, by candlelight or in the shaded glow of petrol lamps; she would even go so far as to accept the incandescent bulbs of Mr. Edison, though, Heaven knew, they might burst in mid-air almost at any time. But to romp across a stage charged with all

the unharnessed demons of electricity—this was something else again. "*Spasibo*" ("Thank you"), said the ballerina, "I do not think so."

With this unfortunate episode the London hopes were dashed. Before giving further demonstrations, Anthony must return to his laboratory in order to make additional experiments that would render his invention safe in any climate. He must study weather charts and atmospheric conditions, particularly in Europe where two strictly different climates prevailed. Portugal, England and France had Atlantic or ocean climate, with an atmosphere that was salty and damp. Germany, Austria and Central Europe in general had Russian or continental climate, dry and sunny (except on the seacoast where fogs prevailed). Scandinavia, Italy, the Balkans must be fitted into this picture before Anthony would venture forth again to conquer the world with an electric spark.

He spent nearly a year searching for improvements. Meanwhile the firm of Schwabe & Co. in Berlin chalked up one success after another with the German patents. A great Roman spectacle was being shown at the Circus Busch, during which a hurricane was rendered more realistic through the use of Anthony's apparatus. Again, Max Reinhardt produced the historic drama *St. Helena*, depicting Napoleon's rise and fall; during a climactic scene the Corsican was shown pointing with his finger at a map of Europe and exclaiming, "All this I intend to

rule!" Whereupon a thousand sparks burst up symbolically from the geographic chart. But although the process carried Anthony's name, no royalties were paid to anyone but Schwabe.

Far from feeling any bitterness about this, Camille and her brother rejoiced in the prestige that could not fail to accrue to Anthony's advantage. Old friends like Spanagel, Mikoray, Weiss and Mestern rallied to the little laboratory in the Dernburgstrasse, eager to encourage and applaud, while favorable newspaper comments urged the young inventor on to further efforts.

It was the press that presently awakened the interest of the *Compagnie Générale des Travaux d'Eclairage et de Force* in Paris, which furnished all the lighting effects at the Opéra, Odéon, Comédie Française, etc. Three representatives, Jean Louis Maurice Lefort, Lucien Jules Guggenheim and a Zürich lawyer named Roger Martin, opened the negotiations and requested a demonstration in the presence of six members of the fire brigade.

Anthony's improvements had progressed to the point where veils and other protective headgear could be discarded, but it was too late to recapture the frightened Pavlova. Perhaps Paris would compensate him for that fiasco, since the French theatrical firmament was ablaze with promising names: Rachel, Réjane, Sorel, Lantelme, Deslys. . . . While none of these could parallel Pavlova's international fame, each was sufficiently prominent in

Europe to serve as an admirable foil for the "spectacle ray." Anthony was filled with renewed hope.

After the most careful preparations, trunks were again packed and the heavy machinery was boxed in suitable cases. With high spirits brother and sister departed for France. Their reception in Paris was cordial in the extreme. Through an attorney, Gustave Frey, whom Anthony had engaged for the handling of his affairs, contact was made with a technical expert, Professor Paul Viarmont. He had been recommended by the patent office, along with a notary in the Rue Royale, Auguste Armand Cottin.

Professor Viarmont was tremendously agog over Anthony's invention, because of a repressed passion for the theatre which he had been forced to abandon in his youth. Whenever possible the venerable physicist and engineer left his classes at the Sorbonne and hied himself to the Comédie, where electricians, costumers and prop boys alike depended upon him for advice. Throughout Sarah Bernhardt's long reign as undisputed idol of France Viarmont had supplied her with the energizing chemical baths that enabled this frail wraith of a woman to continue her exhausting career. He called her by her real name, Rosina, and he had taught her the motto she clung to so steadfastly, "*Quand même!*" Between acts, during a particularly dramatic performance, Bernhardt frequently dropped into a dead faint, from which she had to be

roused by thermal treatments and electrical massage. She kept her personal physician and a supply of hypodermic needles always at hand, lest the milder measures of Viarmont should not prove fast enough. In order to prevent the public from knowing how ill she was (early in life one kidney had been removed, and she would later lose a leg through gangrene) the valiant woman ordered the broadcasting of a picturesque and truly feminine fable. The long Bernhardt intermissions, people read in their program notes, were due to Sarah's penchant for devising new and original costume changes during each performance. This kept her audiences content. Instead of showing impatience, they waited eagerly and with bated breath for each reappearance, certain that she had spent the intervening time in her dressing room, modeling, fitting and pinning fresh creations that were designed for their particular delight. If, at times, Bernhardt was too sick to walk on stage again, she opened the next act reclining on a couch. This too was applauded by appreciative spectators who promptly observed that she seemed to be introducing a noteworthy style in hostess gowns or an especially fetching negligée.

For Camille and Anthony the daily contact with Professor Viarmont proved both exhilarating and inspiring. To hear from his lips the story of a triumphant life, overshadowed with tragedy and martyrdom, added an unforgettable note of drama to their Paris stay.

In the matter of the "spectacle ray" Viarmont and Cottin were of great assistance. One question which needed clarifying was the fact that the patent had been made out in Camille's name, since Anthony had insisted on giving his sister credit for the original discovery of the color ray. Furthermore, her divorce not being final, she was registered as Madame Ferdinand Zhaniel, which added to the confusion. Only after all legal aspects had been unraveled did Cottin and Frey obtain permission for the use of the showrooms at the *Compagnie Générale*, located in the Rue Lamartine.

A select group of artists, producers and stage managers had been invited to the demonstration, among them Maurice Maeterlinck and the incomparable Sacha Guitry. Maeterlinck's interest in the new lighting process was naturally bound up with his current production of *The Blue Bird*.

At last the demonstration could begin. While the six firemen stood awkwardly about, clanking their helmets and brandishing the polished nozzle of a hose, Camille mounted the improvised stage. She wore her Isadora Duncan costume minus the shawl. Her hair was pinned into the tight little ringlets seen on a Greek statue.

As the rich play of lights began, the audience remained silent and awe-struck, unable to choose between delight and fear. Anthony himself looked for a moment toward the firemen, as though to reassure himself that they would

keep Camille (and the spectators) from being burned to a crisp. But in another instant his doubts were banished; the computations, tested over and over in his own laboratory, had proved correct.

"Bravo!" cried the enthusiastic Frenchmen, clapping their hands and embracing one another in true Gallic exuberance.

"It is just what the Théâtre Odéon needs for that presentation of *Faust*—"

"The Mephisto scenes will be phenomenal!"

"*Parbleu*, wherever the Devil steps there must be sparks flying in all direction!"

"*Certainement!* We buy the process and we buy the inventor as well because it is he who must work this infernal machine."

Within twenty-four hours a contract had been signed and the sale was made. Again Anthony agreed to surrender his process outright, but this time his decision was due to a very persuasive clause in the contract, according to which he was to manipulate all the apparatus at a salary surpassing the usual royalties. This would widen his field of contacts and give him a foothold in France. Meanwhile, since *Faust* would not be put on before winter, there was time for a rest on the Balaton.

Early in June, 1914, brother and sister set out cheerfully for Hungary. Their Paris triumph had led to an additional prospect, which permitted the greatest hopes; an

American promoter, Mr. Bollinger, had come to investigate the "spectacle ray" for his friend, Florenz Ziegfeld, a producer on Broadway.

In addition, the brilliant Mestern had allied himself with Anthony in the development of another project. Together the two men built an air-purifying machine which created ozone and was particularly useful in schools, hospitals and factories, where people gathered in large numbers and robbed one another of oxygen. The patent for this purifier was quickly obtained and through Mestern's many business contacts a commercial outlet soon presented itself. This time, since Anthony did not handle the sale, the co-inventors retained their rights and were entitled to a mounting royalty.

The faithful ship *Ancamire* came in for a good bit of use that year. In need of sunshine and outdoor life after their cloistered laboratory existence, Camille and Anthony roamed over the lake in their cabinless craft, exposed to the invigorating action of wind and spray. But even at play they did not find complete relaxation, for Anthony was already off on another scientific tangent. During the London and Paris journeys he had been annoyed by the constant breakage of electric light bulbs, which in those days contained a fragile carbon thread. In order to cut down this waste he designed cunningly wired containers for the shipment of bulbs by the dozen without danger of their being damaged en route. He made a sample case



Anthony de Lászlo

and sent it forthwith to Mestern, who delightedly registered the new creation and obtained another patent for his friend. This new invention, so simple in principle, had enormous possibilities; electric light bulbs made their way around the globe, and any device that gave insurance against breakage would be avidly seized upon by harassed manufacturers.

Again, Anthony revived an early experiment that had interested him in connection with his "spectacle ray." When properly harnessed, this ray could be sent from one given point to another in an infinitesimal fraction of a second. Was not here a novel scheme for placards, signs and other forms of electric advertising? Letters could be outlined atop buildings, merely by the use of a few metal spikes, between which the rays would travel in an ever-changing spectroscopie of color. The initial experiments for this grandiose scheme had been going on intermittently at his flat in Berlin, but the motor that sent the ray up to the housetop made so much noise that the neighbors complained and threatened to move out. Because of this, Anthony had not made much headway with his sky-writing dream. Its advantage in keeping buildings from being defaced by ugly wire skeletons or tubes that marred the daytime horizon were as yet too menacingly offset by the sinister hum of an electric bolt let loose on the night air.

Between boat rides on the Balaton, Anthony pondered

the problem anew. Something drastic must be done before a second demonstration would be permitted by Berlin's hard-headed police chief, Jagow. Not long ago this conservative official had condemned all outdoor advertising on the ground that it diverted attention and thereby became a traffic hazard. He had torn down the expensive illuminated sign of the Muratti cigarette firm because people gathered in droves to see seven little messengers carrying the letters that spelled out the brand. "When advertising causes an obstruction in the city streets," maintained Jagow, "it becomes a public nuisance." He was quite certain that Anthony László's invention was in the nuisance class.

As for Camille, she had gradually accustomed herself to the endless drive that was her brother's life. Never, even in her most active barnstorming days, had she been so drained of energy as the Berlin winters (or the Balaton summers) now left her. Anthony was a human dynamo with a pushing force that seemed unlimited. This very excess of vitality, both physical and mental, fed her confidence in his genius and his ultimate destiny. That the forces within him were not properly balanced she was unable to perceive at this early date, though even now it could not escape her that he showed little interest in the pleasures common to young men of twenty-five. His love-life was lived in the Elysian fields of speculative science;

for him romance dwelled in the cold realm of the mechanistic arts.

It was a realm far different from the one she had abandoned, but this she did not regret. Her work, she realized now, had all been emotional, interpretive and evanescent. He, on the other hand, was a creator who made things with his brain and with his hands. Beside the little brother whom she had begun to exalt, perhaps beyond his stature, she was beginning to feel quite small herself.

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PART II

AMERICA

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Chapter 22

WAR

ON JUNE 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg, died by an assassin's hand at Sarajevo.

As though in a trance, Camille received the dreadful news, unable to believe it. For her, Franz Ferdinand had always been a living memory of a prince, madly in love, who flirted in a Pressburg theatre with the lady of his choice, across the heads of six ungainly maiden cousins and their hatchet-faced mama. He had married that lady of his choice and she had borne him three beautiful children who now, if this ghastly message were true, had been orphaned by a senseless blow of fate. But it could not be true. A love story like that of Franz Ferdinand and Sophia Chotek did not end; it went on forever.

Forever? Where were Rudolf of Hapsburg and pas-

sionate Marie Vetsera? What had become of Maximilian and Carlota of Mexico? Did not the Norns spin their loveliest tales in order to rip them apart in hideous fashion? The news from Sarajevo was but a conventional ending evolved by the evil sisters with many a gloating cackle as they wound up and spun the thread of destiny anew. . . .

After the first sentimental echoes that rang throughout Austria-Hungary had been dissipated, a new report stirred people's hearts. War! The murder of an heir to a throne could not go unavenged!

At Lake Balaton holiday visitors packed up their bathing suits and sporting togs; military offices seemed suddenly to have sprung up in every town and hamlet, catching the young men as they hurried home. At Székesfehérvár, where he had obtained the materials for building his boat, Anthony reported to the colors. He felt very silly doing so, since he had never quarreled with anybody in his life and he saw no reason for quarreling now, but the word "honor" floated through the air. Men who did not rally when their country called them into no matter what futile enterprise were somehow devoid of "honor." No man anywhere wished to be thought lacking in this dubious virtue, therefore men everywhere enlisted in its name. The illogical upshot was that presently a whole world of honorable men was at war for the sake of honor, with virtue on all sides and guilt on none.

For Anthony this did not make much sense, but he

realized that it would be impossible to stem the tide. Young Frenchmen, Germans, Britons, all had to do what he was doing now, namely, take off their shirts and have their chests examined, as well as their eyes, spines and arches.

The examinations were rather perfunctory. Boys bronzed in the summer sun looked fit as the gods and could be sent off to the front without a qualm. It was only when, like Anthony, they could not find their eye-glasses again while dressing that the recruiting officer took notice. Myopia in a soldier was bad. He might become confused and lose his bearings, bringing disaster on his own comrades, simply because he could not tell the difference between friend or foe.

"Your eyes are very bad," the army physician said to Anthony; "since when have they been like this?"

Anthony brightened. "Since my invention of the colored ray that—"

"Dismissed," barked the medico who feared (rightly) a long tale coming on. With several thousand boys waiting in line he could not afford to listen to crackpot inventors.

Crestfallen, Anthony joined Camille in Budapest. The fact that he had not been accepted for military service did not distress him half so much as the indifference with which the recruiting officers had glossed over his mental qualifications. Had they but listened to the story of his

experiments, they might have found him more valuable than an army corps. The pretty effects created by his rays for Berlin theatre audiences could easily become more grim, and far less pretty, in No Man's Land. Had not Pavlova screamed with horror at the death-dealing potentialities of his beautiful invention? He had never in his life wished to kill anyone, God was his witness to that! But the knowledge that through his brain death could be dealt wholesale, neatly, and with mathematical precision—as well as the utmost economy to the side possessing the fatal device—this thrilled him with an ineffable scientific thrill. The perfection of a formula, the beauty of a job well done, these things excited him beyond measure. Yes, he could have been lured by the temptress herself, Science, to create the infernal machine that would lead Austria-Hungary to victory. . . . But fortunately he had not been asked. Europe still wallowed in the age of chivalry, when men rode off to war on glorious chargers, carrying swords and lances in their hands. If human beings were not yet ready to harness technical knowledge into their service, he would not thrust his secret upon them. Though he could tell them how to fight a war from inside a laboratory, he would keep silent. Let them, who were more blind than he, cast him aside because of his myopia. He would sit back and watch them plunge into their wasteful, primitive campaign.

With the next train Anthony and Camille hurried north-

ward to Berlin, half-hoping that they had been misinformed and that the storm would still blow over. But as they drove into the Friedrichstrasse and Unter den Linden they knew that such hopes were quite vain. The populace was crying "*Nach Paris!*" with the same verve with which French volunteers were even now echoing "*À Berlin!*"

In the midst of this shouting Anthony realized suddenly that Goethe's *Faust* would not be played in France that year nor would the contract for his patent be honored. His plans for the coming winter, sketched out so far ahead, were nullified, since the Parisians most certainly would not need his services now. Again he smiled. If they but knew that the invention they had purchased (and would now discard) could be turned into a terrible instrument of vengeance, he would be kidnaped and spirited to France by force. . . . But again, mercifully, they had no idea, and he did not intend to tell them. He would work for peace, not war.

In the Europe of that day there obviously was nothing more for him to do, since no one had the slightest interest now in scientific or even esthetic improvements. Just as the armies would soon dress in dull field gray, life in cities and towns took on the same monotonous hue.

But there was America—peace-loving, progressive, rich. Mr. Bollinger wrote from New York that Florenz Ziegfeld was seriously interested in the László rays and that

Anthony ought to come over at once to give a demonstration. A colleague of Bollinger's, named Oscar Watts, offered to represent Anthony and to pay all travel expenses, provided he received fifty per cent of the eventual earnings. This seemed an exorbitant demand, but in view of the fact that Anthony and his sister did not speak English, a full-time helper would certainly be needed. Perhaps it would be best to accept.

Early in July the eager Mr. Watts cabled a money order to cover transportation costs. While Camille remained behind, putting furniture in storage and making other final arrangements, Anthony sailed with his instruments and motors. It was agreed that Camille should follow as soon as possible.

After a hectic crossing Anthony reached Ellis Island, where Mr. Watts awaited him with warm handshakes and the news that he had already rented a studio in 42nd Street in the heart of the theatre district. He had also engaged a "shrewd" lawyer, Albert Baum, who would put the patent through in no time at all, after which everything would be easy.

Anthony, who had practiced English on board ship and was already mastering the essentials, hoped to meet Mr. Baum at once, but this was apparently not feasible, because of the demands of his vast clientele. "We'll just drop the apparatus and equipment at the studio," said Watts amiably, "and then I am going to take you to your hotel."

The next day he returned for Anthony and suggested a trial demonstration at the studio, just to make sure that the machinery had not been damaged during the trip. Eagerly Anthony set up his transformers and proceeded to explain the workings of his ray, while Watts took careful notes. After that the two men celebrated their new partnership with a luxurious dinner at Delmonico's, and a show at the Winter Garden, which proved a trifle tedious for Anthony because he could not see the pretty girls. His myopia, as much as anything else, was responsible for his growing indifference to the female sex.

After this auspicious beginning there followed a strange lull of three weeks during which Anthony heard very little from his kind friend, Mr. Watts, and nothing at all from Mr. Baum. There were several telephone calls which he had trouble understanding, but evidently all was well, since the Watts tones over the wire sounded cheerful. Also, the hotel management indicated approvingly that the bills were being paid, so Anthony did not worry. He spent the days studying English verbs and writing to Camille, who had left Germany for Holland where she hoped to get passage on the next available boat.

"The war can't last," wrote Camille confidently. "The last thing I heard in Berlin is that the French have no shoes. Without shoes, how can they fight?"

Anthony marveled at such gullibility. His own recent recollections of France did not agree with the opinion of the German press. Frankly, he had seen no barefoot

Frenchmen. If Prussian tactics were based on so flimsy a premise as that, Germany was heading for trouble.

But his mind did not dwell on Europe at the moment. There was still no sign of Watts, and Anthony had begun to feel nervous. What about the patent? What about Ziegfeld? If the great producer were suddenly to want a demonstration, Anthony would not even be able to find the studio where his equipment was kept, since Watts had neglected mentioning the address.

Through the telephone he at last was able to make contact with Bollinger, though this only added to his confusion. Bollinger seemed startled at hearing Anthony's voice. "Mr. Ziegfeld was notified some time ago," he stammered, "that your invention had changed hands. He is dealing with another person."

Anthony was aghast. "You mean Watts?" he asked, trembling with shock.

"Why, yes," said Bollinger, and the anxiety in his voice rang true. "We heard that the war over there kept you from coming, but that you had sold out to Watts at a very good price. Is something wrong?"

Anthony did not take time to explain what was wrong. He hung up the receiver and pressed his head into his hands. The incredible had happened—it was a standard joke among inventors—he had been robbed.

Now the strange silence of the past weeks took on sudden meaning. Watts had been busy furthering his own

interests, while Anthony was kept safely out of sight. But it was preposterous to think that such crude machinations could succeed! Anthony needed only a first-rate lawyer to put the embezzler behind bars.

But where in this Babylon of cities, was he to find a man to whom he could explain his plight? Despite his daily studies, Anthony had not sufficient command of English to engage in a courtroom fight. In his despair he tried to remember people on board ship who lived in New York and who perhaps would recall that he had been a fellow traveler. But this idea was no good; he had kept completely to himself at sea, so that there could not possibly be anyone whom he could look up now.

There was the ship's line, of course, with its offices downtown. He found the number and resolutely called the Hamburg American Line, introducing himself as a traveler in search of advice. Due to his accent he was turned over to an interpreter who offered unexpected and prompt counsel. The company's attorney, Carl Schurz, would undoubtedly be able to take over the case. An appointment (the fee was twenty-five dollars, though *Hapag* customers could see Mr. Schurz for twenty dollars) would be arranged at once.

Anthony gulped at the expense, but he had no other choice. The following day he entered the great lawyer's office and presented his problem. He spoke German since Schurz, whose pioneer father's name had been commemo-

rated by a public park in New York City, commanded the language fluently. After two hours the lawyer held out his hand.

"It's an unpleasant story," he said, "and one that we unfortunately hear almost every day. But I shall see what I can do."

Practically overnight he obtained a complete line on Watts and his activities. The studio on 42nd Street had not been rented in Anthony's name at all, but in that of Watts and Baum. Similarly, the patents had been falsely claimed and transferred to the two rascals, eliminating the true claimant completely from the picture. What was more, since Anthony had surrendered all his equipment, he could not even prove himself the inventor. Watts held every trump.

Dejectedly Anthony returned to his hotel where, meanwhile, the reassuring payments had stopped. He went through his papers with the utmost care in order to locate some document that would establish his claim. At last, tucked away in a pack of new drawings, the agreement came to light wherein Watts proposed a partnership on equal terms. Armed with this vital paper, he raced once more to Schurz.

"This should do the trick," the latter said confidently, "though I warn you—a fight of this kind takes a long time."

Anthony's funds were shrinking fast, but he could not

afford to give up the battle. Besides, Camille was already in Rotterdam, waiting to sail. Her trunks were en route in mid-ocean, having been loaded by mistake on a vessel too crowded to take on another passenger. As soon as Camille arrived there would be money aplenty because, apart from bringing her savings, she had sold all the family silver.

On a hot July day Anthony waited at the Holland-American pier for the sister whom he had not seen for two months. As she came down the gangplank she fell weeping into his arms, exhausted from a harried voyage through submarine-infested seas on a boat that carried three times its normal human cargo. But she was happy, thrilled beyond words, at entering America.

He dared not, at first, intrude upon this happiness with his own bad news. Since hotel life was too expensive, he had moved into a tiny flat on West 23rd Street, where they would now make their home. He hoped she would not find it too cramped.

Cramped? Camille laughed gaily. She spread out her arms as if to hug the place. After that dreadful voyage on a ship packed like a convict transport nothing would ever again seem cramped. She was delighted at the mere thought of being safe in a country that glorified peace instead of war. America! It was a paradise on earth. . . .

Only gradually, as she began to ask about his work, did Anthony reveal the theft of his invention and the

pressing need for money with which to fight the men who had wronged him. She was stunned by this news. She would not believe it. She refused to let the idealistic America that had taken possession of her soul become identified with anything so bad.

"Watts?" she cried contemptuously. "We have his kind in Vienna, Budapest, Berlin."

He agreed. "Evil has neither race nor creed."

"You are not to hold this thing against the United States," she went on fiercely, as though to forestall even the faintest prejudice; "it could have happened just as well at home!"

He was touched by her determination to let no false bitterness mar their beginning of a new life in a new world. She was right. The thing that had been done to him must not be distorted by geographic concepts; it happened everywhere and all the time.

"Let me see, whom do I know here?" Camille was already pursuing another thought. "Serly Lajos! He composed two operettas for me in Budapest."

She had Anthony employ his already creditable English in order to locate the former orchestra conductor by telephone. Serly was currently in rehearsal with the Dolly Sisters at the Shubert Theatre on 42nd Street.

"Come on over," he urged. "You must meet Jancsika and Rozsika, who are Hungarian like ourselves!"

Anthony and Camille lost no time in heeding this call.

They rode uptown on the Sixth Avenue El and met Serly at the stage entrance. In another moment they had made the acquaintance of the vivacious Dolly twins, who proposed a cozy Magyar reunion at their suburban home.

The very next morning, Sunday, Jancsika Dolly rode up in her prized possession, a shiny new Ford roadster driven by a liveried chauffeur. After effusive Hungarian embraces the visitor brought greetings from Papa and Mama Dolly, who expected Anthony and Camille for a big family dinner of Szegedi *gulyás* and cabbage cake.

It was a wonderful party. Beginning with a ride down Broadway, during which the two ladies managed somehow to pile in beside the dignified chauffeur, the day became an unforgettable series of delights. Life with the Dolly household proved one roistering round of food and drink, the penalties of which were forestalled by the girls through ceaseless dancing. Money was plentiful, as the fashionable country estate bore out. Dogs, servants, cats and horses moved about the property in careless profusion, indicating that the Dolly tribe, though of modest origin, had not forgotten the ways of Hungary's great landholders.

Before the visit was over, every item of gossip from home and abroad had been exhausted, including the story of Anthony's woe. Jancsika and her sister seemed fascinated by his invention, which they insisted upon recommending to the Shuberts at once.

"But we were robbed of the American patent," Camille reminded them, a trifle crestfallen.

Serly Lajos broke into the conversation. "You'll get it back," he prophesied. "We'll see that Watts is boycotted, so he won't find a buyer. That will make him beg you to take the invention back."

These words were entirely sincere, as Anthony and Camille found out that very week. A note from G. J. Shubert assured them of his interest in the case and wished them luck in establishing their ownership, after which Anthony was to have the pick of any Shubert stage in order to hold his first public New York demonstration. Klaw and Erlanger, producers of a revue called *Fad and Fancy*, also were heard from; if Anthony wished a job while waiting for his lawsuit to wind up, there was a well-paid spot for him as electrician with the show.

The Dolly propaganda had worked.

Chapter 23

AMERICA

IT WAS not an outburst of philanthropy that caused hard-boiled New York producers to sponsor the shorn lamb in their midst. It was precaution. If Ziegfeld had shown an interest in the stolen László rays, the young inventor might be a useful adjunct to the personnel of any stage. While waiting for the solution of his patent difficulties he might be induced to create still more spectacular effects by means heretofore unknown. Both the Shubert and the Erlanger firms reasoned this way.

Their speculation proved correct. During the run of *Fad and Fancy* Anthony devised an entirely new system of lighting, produced by giant reflectors concealed in different parts of the house, yet capable of throwing a direct beam on any portion of the stage. Naturally, since

his motors and transformers remained in the possession of Watts, he could not approximate the sparkle and brilliance of his live rays. At the same time there was utter safety in the manipulation of the reflectors, so that the most inept stagehands could be put in charge of them. In the end this very factor, which he himself took pains to point out, would work against Anthony. By the time the lawsuit was won and Watts had been clapped into the Tombs for embezzlement, there were no customers for the "spectacle ray"; the use of reflectors had become general. Color effects and sparks could be produced by moving screens and filters, designed by Anthony as make-shifts until the time when he could put his real process to work. Because of their temporary character the reflectors were not patented. It was only when he realized that they had displaced his earlier invention that Anthony hastened to protect himself, though his impulse came too late. Too many persons had already made use of the process, perfecting a number of details and adding certain refinements, so that the patent office refused recognition of an individual claim. Credit for the "multiple invention" was divided among half a dozen electrical experts, of whom Anthony was only one. This assured him a modest royalty which, in view of the expenses with the lawsuit, barely sufficed to keep counsel Schurz in pin money. At no time did Anthony begrudge these costs, since the great lawyer had ultimately shot down his quarry. After

a year of stubborn courtroom battles, which were defrayed by Camille's savings, brother and sister were awarded their claim as well as the paraphernalia with which Watts had absconded.

They were happy. The fact that Mr. Ziegfeld's interest had meanwhile cooled did not dismay them. With equal nonchalance they faced Shubert and Klaw and Erlanger, who declared themselves content with the reflector system already adapted to their needs. Anthony's precious tools were back in his hands! With the ingenuous optimism that characterizes so many inventors, he looked for new worlds to conquer.

Camille stood resolutely by his side. Throughout the long legal tussle she had carefully nurtured her friendship with Serly Lajos, the Dolly Sisters and a few of their colleagues. This opened doors to further contacts, among them an introduction to a motion-picture director named John Gregory, head of the Artone Film Company in Detroit.

"How would you like to appear in my next picture?" he asked Camille without preliminaries.

She was nonplussed. He could not be serious! Though still youthful in appearance, she was middle-aged and knew herself to be unsuited to her former specialty of a gay ingenue. But Mr. Gregory soon made clear his intentions; he wished Camille to play the part of an Irish grandmother in the comedy, *I'm on My Way to Dublin Bay*.

"Your vivacity and spirit are just right," he said.

Now she felt terrified. Her English was still rudimentary. Could she accept so difficult an assignment? She had never seen an Irish grandame in her life, though presumably the mannerisms of an old crone were the same in any land, so that on the silent screen they could be conveyed by mimicry. Then there was Anthony to be considered; he must have a chance to get back to his inventing. He needed a laboratory. The lawsuit had of course left a serious dent in the family treasury, but was not here a God-given chance to recuperate from that loss? Assuredly it would be folly to turn down such an opportunity as this, particularly since it might set them back on their feet and bring Anthony his big chance.

She signed the contract. Early in 1916 their few possessions were packed, and brother and sister moved to Detroit.

Director Gregory was already on location at Put-in-Bay, where a papier-mâché Irish hamlet was being erected. During the filming, heavy spring rains set in and delayed the work, much to the delight of the townspeople who flocked in droves to see the acting folk close at hand. Friendships were cemented and presently all Put-in-Bay opened its hospitable doors to the "picture stars." The heroine and her leading man, as well as the Irish grandmother from Hungary, were invited to successive chicken dinners at the homes of the local druggist, the preacher, the school-



Camille (second from left) playing an Irish grandmother in the American film
I'm on My Way To Dublin Bay

master and the physician. Camille was delighted. Not only did she love the work, but her heart was touched by the unstinted kindness that was being lavished upon her by complete strangers. When the last reel of the picture had been finished, she wept. "A good people, a good land," she said in the new tongue which she was making her own.

Anthony, meanwhile, had struck out for himself and made a splendid contact. He was employed in the drafting department of the Ford Motor Company, not for the designing of car bodies, but of machinery that would speed up production of mass quantities. During his free time in the evening and on week ends he drew ship models for the Caille Motor Boat Company. Both firms paid generous salaries, so that his financial worries were definitely over.

During all this time the war in Europe was increasing in intensity. America, at first scrupulously neutral, veered gradually to the Allied side, though no one dreamed of the possibility of involvement. President Wilson visited Detroit on his campaign for re-election, with banners that proclaimed the well-nigh irresistible slogan, "He Kept Us Out of War." Yet less than six months later America entered the conflict in the cause of the Allies. "All Lies" paraphrased a diminishing pro-German contingent, which presently drew upon itself the nation's fury. United States authorities grew spy-conscious, not only abroad but at

home. A relentless search for enemy agents and saboteurs began, during which aliens were rounded up, questioned and fingerprinted. In thickly populated industrial sections like Detroit, where factories had been pressed into service as munitions plants, the dragnet was spread with special care.

Ford employed at that time more than fifty engineers and tool designers in the drafting department alone. Among these were many Germans. Up to the time of America's entry they had discussed the war with some frankness and heat, which now rendered all their acts suspect. One colleague of Anthony's, named Bittmann, disappeared after a sudden search was made of his house; it was later learned that he had been imprisoned and all his property confiscated. He was not heard from again. Another department head who had the misfortune of being called Emden met with dark glances, due to the piratical exploits of a cruiser by that name.

Hungarians naturally fell into the same category as Germans, since they were allied with the hated Teuton legions. Though as Magyars they were the original Huns, descended from Attila, they found this generic term now freely and witlessly tossed about by a ranting press when referring to the Kaiser's goosesteppers. Inaccuracy and intellectual myopia governed, as usual, the wartime scene.

For Anthony and Camille the waves of patriotic emotion assumed a particularly menacing air, due to their own

rootlessness and sense of desertion in a land that was not yet home. They spoke English with a heavy accent, thereby drawing on themselves the contempt of grocers, clerks and even a "one-hundred per cent American" postman. In order to avoid such exposure of their failings they retired from public contacts and limited their social life to a few visits with fellow Hungarians from the Magyar suburb of Detroit, Delrey. But one day, as Camille telephoned a former Budapest friend with whom she chatted in the old Dobsina dialect, an angry operator interrupted the conversation. "What kind of language is that?" she asked, adding a warning. "Better speak English, or I'll report you." This put an end to 'phone calls and led to an unexpected economy inasmuch as Anthony had the service discontinued.

At the Artone Studios work was slowing down. Camille had been advanced to a leading part in the filming of *Fifi*, the rôle she had frequently played in Europe; but when this assignment was completed, Director Gregory packed his effects and accepted a summons to Hollywood, where spy and propaganda pictures were being turned out on a gigantic scale. While Artone Studios quietly disbanded, the capable Gregory lent his gifts to the production of such timely epics as *The Beast of Berlin* and sundry varieties of Teuton rapine.

A colleague of Camille, left jobless by the dissolution of Artone, was the former opera star, Thea von Norden, who,

having lost her voice, had become a competent character actress in films. She lived with a niece, Dora von Georgie. Since both ladies spoke high German (Madame Norden had made her *début* in Hanover, where the most precise diction prevails) their visits to Camille's rooms could not but be observed by disapproving neighbors who felt honor-bound to keep their eyes open for subversive activities.

It happened that everything one did could in some fashion or another be interpreted as subversive. Due to the onus that had attached itself to every foreigner, Anthony and Camille gradually cut themselves off from all outside contacts, shunning even the little Hungarian delicatessen shops where normally it had been their custom to purchase favorite foods such as *paprikás szallona*, *lekvar* of fruits, poppy-seed cakes, *Liptauer* cheese, the jellied meats called *friss kocsonya*, and the delicious *Dobos Torte*. Only in Camillushka's memory of childhood days in Dobsina, under the culinary scepter of old Suse, did these delicacies survive in all their tempting glory.

If brother and sister had hitherto been viewed suspiciously because of their speech they were now watched with doubled intensity because of their silence. Anthony, in particular, gave ample provocation to patriotic busybodies round about. His constant hammering and puttering inside the tiny laboratory he had fashioned for himself aroused the most avid curiosity. People could not realize that lack of social diversions outside the home had driven

the lonely Hungarian pair to seek other pursuits with which to fill their idle hours. After completing his daily chores for the Ford and Caille plants, Anthony had resumed experimentation on the advertising beam that had failed in Berlin, while Camille painstakingly translated the descriptive report on the lamp packaging device in order to obtain the American patent. As matters turned out, the latter task proved a waste of time; a recent Edison improvement, the sturdy Mazda bulb, traveled safely in cheap cartons and required no special care in handling. Anthony's patent was refused.

This disappointment, like everything else, must be accepted in silence. But the continuance of that silence would ultimately tax neighborhood nerves to capacity. What went on in that little laboratory where the light burned at all hours of the night? People began to wonder about the strangers, who claimed to be brother and sister yet had different names. The daily papers carried many a story about the adventuress, Mata Hari, and her lovers; perhaps this Camille and her young companion were not related at all, but sinfully bound together in a similar pursuit. Probably the actress was a foreign operative who employed her histrionic disguises in order to uncover American munitions secrets, while her paramour spent the midnight hours decoding messages and recoding them for transmission abroad. The humming and drumming that went on inside the laboratory very likely

proved the existence of a secret wireless station which no doubt was in constant touch with Germany.

Speculation was rife and it could not go on indefinitely. One morning in November, as she stepped out into the upper hall, Camille overheard whispers on the lower stair landing. Three neighbor women were engaged in excited conversation.

"There's going to be a search," one of them declared, pointing upward with a determined thumb, "and we'll be finding out what this is all about!"

Instantly Camille slipped back inside, closing the door softly behind her. Her heart was pounding and she had to pause for breath before full comprehension of the situation dawned upon her.

"Toni!" she called to her brother, who had not yet sat down to breakfast. "Something terrible is afoot! They are searching houses on our street—"

He did not understand her anxiety. "Let them search," he said. "It is wartime routine, and we have nothing to conceal."

"Your motors, your laboratory apparatus—" she prompted.

"They are quite innocent, as is the nature of my research."

She drew nearer and her voice was lowered to a whisper. "Toni," she said, "the people outside sound angry. They do not think that your experiments are harmless. They think we are spies."

He grew pale. His tired eyes stared glassily ahead as the meaning of her words struck his consciousness. With the objectivity of the scientist he could not at first believe what obviously was an emanation of his sister's emotional thinking. Her nervous fears had conjured up demons before. But this time there was a ring in Camille's voice that carried sufficient conviction to cause him to step into the hallway and to listen for himself. What he heard was deeply offending to his guileless and almost naïve scholarly soul.

"They are children," he said astounded. "Yes, you are right. They think that I am doing something evil."

"Well—?" Camille waited breathlessly for his decision.

"We must destroy the motors at once. Tear down the wires and empty the batteries. Bring out my drawings and papers, and build a fire in the stove—"

She scurried about, following instructions, while Anthony methodically dismantled his workshop. He was late at the office that morning, but by the time the searchers arrived and presented their credentials Camille admitted them into a home devoid of all interest. Every electrical device had been dashed to smithereens and dumped into the trash buckets that lined a rear alley, while all of Anthony's writings, his Mittweida notes and diplomas had been reduced to a neat mound of ashes.

Only one thing did brother and sister have the courage to preserve—a small collection of clippings concerning

Anthony's Berlin and Paris successes with the Rheinhardt productions of *Cedipus* and *Armin*, in both of which the spectacle ray had figured with great prominence. The newspaper reviews, in German and French, were translated at police headquarters and found innocent enough.

"The vast stage of the Circus Busch," wrote the *Morgenpost* of Berlin, December 25, 1910, "has never given us a more effective and dazzling spectacle. The battle of the Teutoburg Forest, accompanied by an electric storm during which terrific bolts of lightning crash into the mighty oak trees, is indescribable in its fury and dramatic value." Similarly the *Vossische Zeitung* chorused: "Masterful stage settings and technical equipment! It was a stroke of genius to employ electrical inductors of colossal power for the creation of the hurricane in Act III during which tree trunks are torn asunder by Wotan's angry bolts. Yet, following this, how peaceful the exquisite sunrise and the dream world of Armin's Valhalla . . ." The Paris *Soir* rhapsodized in no less glowing terms: "Nature herself is surpassed in beauty and effectiveness by the extraordinary perfection of the László-Zhaniel lighting process. Here was an *Cedipus* performance colored and highlighted to fit each gripping mood. It is to be hoped that we may soon introduce this notable improvement in our own National Opera."

"What's all this about?" asked a mystified Detroit deputy. "You got some kind of ray here, have you?"

Anthony smiled sadly. "No," he replied, "only some worthless patents on a process that is not in use."

He brought out the yellowed certificates, which were inspected at headquarters and listed in the proper order:

Hungary	.....	No. 51039
Austria	.....	No. 43873
Germany	.....	No. 214121
England	.....	No. 20201
France	.....	No. 405104
U.S.A.	.....	No. 973736

With this the investigation ended, since there was nothing more to lay a finger on. Recent letters from Hungary had of course been consigned to the flames by a timorous Camille; she knew that their contents, interspersed with inevitable anti-Allied sentiments uttered before the United States had entered the fray, might easily be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Let them burn rather than be fashioned into a tragic boomerang.

In destroying even these last vestiges of personal contact, Anthony and Camille by one single stroke had blotted out a world that had once been theirs; not a document, not a drawing or a penciled line remained.

They had broken with the past forever.

Chapter 24

THE WESTWARD TREK CONTINUES

A NEW AND unaccustomed idleness set in. Not yet at home in the English tongue, brother and sister still spoke Hungarian with each other, thus calling attention upon themselves if they attended a theatre or motion picture show. This led to a fresh quandary and an imperative solution: either they must stay away from all public gatherings or else practice the daily and intimate use of English. The task was less easy than it sounded. To use a new language on tradesmen and strangers in general was simple enough, but to substitute it for the lifelong medium that has been employed by two closely associated persons since childhood was quite another thing. Up to now, Anthony and Camille had been lonely together. After discarding their mother tongue and attempting, for the sake of practice, to speak English in the privacy of their rooms, each felt lonely alone.

But there was no choice. They must become a part of this new and alien world—or else perish.

With his laboratory gone, Anthony cast about for some hobby with which to fill the long evenings of leisure. It must be something simple, unambitious, comprehensible even to the scrubwoman who once a week came to wash windows and clean up the place.

He hit upon a miniature theatre, with scenery, curtain, backdrops and tiny lights. The sets were painted with the utmost care. Quaint sawdust puppets were costumed to fit every rôle played by Camille during her long career. By means of strings the figurines were moved about, bowing, dancing or gesturing in the best marionette manner. But Anthony was not happy.

"This is a pastime," he muttered contemptuously. "Time is too valuable merely to be *passed*. . . ."

The creative urge that made up his entire being gave him no peace. He paced up and down the narrow rooms like a caged animal in need of action.

"If we cannot use these hours to better advantage," he complained, "let us take up war work. Let us make bandages or knit clothing for soldiers at the front."

"American soldiers?" she asked, just to make sure that she had heard right.

"Certainly," he replied, "though, for that matter, a soldier is a soldier, regardless of his flag."

She went to the Red Cross for wool and a few lessons

in knitting (at home in Dobsina the Remenyik ladies had never learned this humble craft). Armed with khaki-colored yarn, two sets of needles and a manual of knitting directions, she returned to her fireside. Henceforth the neighbors had nothing to worry about, for, peering behind window shades and cracks, they spied a homely and completely reassuring scene. The strange Madame Fehér de Vernet and the even stranger Mr. László sat quietly together, picking up stitches, purling, unraveling a ball of yarn, or turning the heel of an impressive sock.

"We make things for the dugboys (doughboys)," Camille informed the corner druggist, knowing that through him the entire neighborhood would learn of their exploits.

Her conjecture was right. Their Red Cross activities put brother and sister in a different light. By the time the war was over and it became known that they had supplied five dozen hand-made socks and an equal number of trench caps, Camille and Anthony enjoyed the highest esteem of everyone living on their street.

Knitting did not exhaust their participation in wartime activities. Knowing that his own earnings at the Ford plant had been boosted as the result of America's entry into the European struggle, Anthony felt that he owed a financial debt as well. Thus, at Christmas, he took his savings from the bank and exchanged them for Liberty Bonds. Only after this step had been taken did he relax

in the comforting assurance of having done all that lay in his power to do.

At last the winter of 1918 brought to the world a promise of peace, though with this peace would come a period of difficult readjustment. Particularly was this true of industrial centers like Detroit, where factories keyed to maximum production found themselves suddenly glutted with war materials for which there would be no further use. Pay rolls that had been stretched to cover twice the number of employees formerly needed now shrank back to normal pre-war size and under, while thousands of workmen found themselves promptly discharged. In a body, manufacturers everywhere took the first signal of the Armistice as their cue for setting back the economic clock.

In the general cutting down of expenses Anthony was bound to be an early casualty. His job in the Ford drafting department had not been primarily concerned with the designing of new car bodies but with the improvement of machinery necessary to step up production. Now that the business tempo was slowing down, speed experts became superfluous; if anything, there was need for men who knew how production might conveniently be cut in two.

As for the firm of Caille, it had quietly closed its shops. Rich playboys were not yachting these days, so that the

demand for expensive motorboats had fallen below par. Shipbuilders made a wise decision to wait until their millionaire customers recovered a modicum of confidence in the stock market.

A somewhat precarious period started for Anthony and Camille. For the first time in their lives they were both without employment and without immediate hope of income. True, Camille's funds, which she had brought from Europe, would see them through the winter—but Hungarian crowns and German marks translated into dollars made a poor showing at best.

The cold in Michigan that year was particularly intense. The snow piled up in huge drifts and blew through door and window cracks, and the glass panes were covered with thick frost. An epidemic of Spanish influenza, having mysteriously started in the trenches on the Western Front, was making its way around the world, sweeping America with particular virulence. In the United States alone the toll of human lives surpassed the casualties suffered by the A.E.F. in France.

Almost at once Camille fell prey to the disease, lying for days in semi-delirium and with a high fever. It was while nursing her and attending to the household chores that Anthony began to toy with a daring plan. A neighborhood physician who called twice a day pointed out that Camille's constitution was not equal to the rigors of a northern winter. "Why don't you move to California?"

he proposed. "With its Mediterranean climate it will remind you of your native Hungary."

California! The very name evoked visions of unearthly loveliness and bliss. Not in America alone, but in Europe, Asia, Australia, the wonders of that fairyland had been extolled so eloquently that at the mere mention of it people felt themselves gripped by a secret nostalgia. Even in Budapest and on the fair shores of Lake Balaton Anthony had heard men sigh: "California—ah, it is said to be beyond description!"

As Camille slowly emerged from danger he sat beside her sickbed and cautiously broached the subject of another change. He named Los Angeles as a tentative destination, extolling its sunshine and the invigorating ocean breeze.

"How much will it cost?" she asked with a worried look that seldom left her eyes nowadays.

His optimism was reassuring. Dr. Winthrop, he explained, knew of special tourist rates that were within the reach of almost every purse, even their own.

She pointed to a batch of letters, the first post-war mail to arrive from Europe. Anthony knew what it contained: urgent pleas for clothing, food and money.

"They believe everybody in America is a millionaire," she murmured bitterly; "they imagine the streets over here are paved with gold!"

He nodded. Each of the missives opened with the blithe

assumption that the United States had grown spectacularly wealthy while the unhappy people of the Old World bled to death. The least that Anthony and Camille could do, so ran the tenor of the letters, was to share a portion of their riches with their less fortunate kin.

"What can we do for them?" fretted Camille. "We hardly know ourselves where to turn next."

They put themselves to the hard task of answering each plea with utmost frankness and detail, explaining that America knew poverty as well, and that an uncommon portion of luck was required to gain a foothold here. Their own lot, while not critical, was still fraught with considerable hazard.

These explanations met with cynicism and contempt abroad, where they were interpreted by the now destitute Hus and Remenyik families as cold treachery.

"America has robbed you of a heart," wrote Aunt Tilka, whom the Versailles Treaty had turned into an unwilling Yugoslav. Other relatives, forcibly scattered by the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary, voiced their disappointment from Rumania, Poland and the hated Czechoslovak republic. They all agreed on one point: Camille and Anthony had sacrificed their family loyalty on the altar of greed.

With the loneliness of expatriation still upon them, brother and sister found these accusations hard to bear. Already estranged from their old world, they had not yet

learned how to grapple with the new or to win from it a sense of security. How then could they meet the uncomprehending demands from home? (Tilka was not petty with figures: she wished for a quick "loan" of a thousand dollars, while several remote cousins declared they would be content with five hundred apiece.)

Disconsolately, Camille turned to her Belgian friend, Baroness von Königswärter who, German born, had recently returned to Berlin where she lived off the bounty of her former serving maid. It was through the Baroness that contact was made with the storage firm where Camille's furniture and linens had been cared for during the war. These things were now sold at auction and the proceeds sent to Aunt Tilka, with instructions that they were to be divided among such relatives as were most acutely in need.

Having discharged this not altogether filial duty, Camille found herself viewing California with more receptive eyes. What money they had still in their possession (and it was scarcely more than enough to take them to the West Coast) ought to be used in furthering their chances for success in this America where they intended to make their home. Yes, she was ready for the long Pacific trek. Not only that; having resided on United States soil for more than the required five years, she intended to apply for citizenship, an ambition in which Anthony heartily concurred. Brother and sister resolved to

take the first steps immediately on their arrival in Los Angeles.

The journey via Chicago across the great plains, the continental divide, the desert and cattle lands, proved an unforgettable experience. For Camille, still weak from her siege of grippe, the endless days of travel were relieved by the ever-changing panorama outside her train window. Necessity had dictated the cheapest transportation possible, but the cleanliness and comfort of American day coaches at that time compared so favorably with deluxe service abroad that neither she nor her brother saw the slightest reason for complaint.

At last, on a starry night in the spring of 1920, Los Angeles came into view, spilling a flood of jeweled lights over her countless hills—a gaudy, sprawling city, full of ebullience and glare.

Lightheartedly and with a new sense of courage Camille stepped from the train. She looked eagerly about, as her lungs filled with the fresh, ocean-cleansed air. Land of the Caliphates! She was going to like it here. . . .

They had no trouble at all finding inexpensive lodgings in a modest section of Los Angeles. But even before a single trunk or suitcase had been unpacked, Anthony was scanning the want-ad columns in the town's two leading newspapers. Armed with a list of possible prospects he set out the next morning in search of work.

California at that time had already become the Mecca toward which humanity converged from the four corners of the globe, searching for the legendary pot of gold. The growing fruit industry no less than the expanding motion-picture studios had attracted a stream of newcomers whom the state could not possibly absorb. Thus there were two dozen skilled, and as many untrained, workmen battling for a single job. In the face of such competition it was folly to hope for an opening in a specific field, such as electrical or chemical engineering; the trick was to find any kind of work at all.

After four weeks of searching, Anthony finally made a connection with the Howard Refrigerating Company which manufactured iceboxes. He had never in his life known even the most elementary thing about any cooling apparatus, but America had already taught him one thing—to balk at no chore. In Europe professionalism imposed strange rigors upon men; it pressed them into grooves from which there was no escape. If a man was a lawyer he must practice law, even if there were no clients to make use of his services; if he did not practice law, he starved. Here in the United States professions were tossed aside or interchanged at will; physicians, lawyers, bricklayers or prizefighters might not find work in their particular domain, but that did not dismay them. They went to work as window washers, janitors, film executives or

playwrights. Nothing stopped them, least of all the negligible classification stamped upon them by their chosen profession.

It was with this first attribute of Americanism that Anthony approached his new duties. Unmindful of his training as a designer of automobiles, motorboats and electrical machinery, he cheerfully turned to iceboxes. Their proper construction, insulation (and eventual electrification) presently absorbed his waking hours, especially since the Howard firm encouraged experimenters in its shop.

Camille for her part was bent upon higher pursuits. Although Mr. Gregory and the Dolly Sisters had supplied her with letters of introduction to Eric von Stroheim, at that time one of Hollywood's most successful if erratic directors, her mind and heart were not in the theatre. She was determined to become a citizen of the United States before seeking any form of employment. As soon as Anthony had obtained the Howard job and a modest monthly income was assured she persuaded him to enroll with her at night school, where they would learn American history, civics and the matchless Preamble to the Constitution.

The immigrant class of which they were a part met three times a week in the ill-ventilated rooms of the Hyde Park High School. Here, with forty-seven assorted "students" of varied nationalities, Camille and her brother

sat on a narrow bench and recited the names of all the presidents since George Washington, the salaries and terms of United States congressmen, the definition of a quorum, the exact meaning of the term "gerrymander," the procedure by which justices of the Supreme Court attained office, the proper conduct of an election, sundry amendments to the Constitution, and the text of "The Star Spangled Banner."

It was an exciting and at times amusing adventure. Since most of the applicants were adults to whom a new language did not come easily the class presented something of a philological problem. Atrocious accents filled the air, particularly when some Croat, Slovene or Bulgarian expounded the virtues of Democracy by defining that system as "government by de bible, for de bible, mit de bible." . . .

A Mr. Kelso, gentle and patient, instructed the class and kept a straight face during recitations. In fact, when pressed for an opinion, Mr. Kelso (who normally taught algebra to a group of languid adolescents) much preferred his night-school immigrants, who ranged between twenty-five and seventy years of age. American youth, he decided, took too much for granted, whereas these newcomers appraised and valued what they saw in the light of all that they formerly had lacked. Thus Mr. Kelso's night-school pupils made him feel at times that his dry pedagogue's life had not been altogether misspent; their

murderous mistakes in English, their guttural debates, their pained bewilderment when something had not been sufficiently explained—all this was amply offset by a disarming sincerity with which the groping foreign mind endeavored to transplant its roots.

To be sure, halfway through the course an occasional black sheep dropped by the wayside. Some—particularly among the older folk—were linguistically unable to keep abreast; they simply could not master their lessons. Others, imbued with pacifist ideas, balked at the arms-bearing clause in the oath of allegiance. One young girl fell in love and disappeared with a native American taxicab driver, who married her forthwith, and so speeded her naturalization.

“Ach,” beamed her Bavarian mother in class the following day, “she clopst *sehr* in a jiffy and now she does not have to study any more!”

But the majority plugged faithfully along to the end of the difficult course until at last, after twelve weeks of anxious preparation, the final test drew near. Led by a pale and slightly nervous Mr. Kelso, the class appeared in court before Judge Bledso, who was to hold the examination. Following the verbal questions there were a number of written answers to be submitted on a long sheet of paper. As a final stipulation, before taking the oath, each applicant was asked to state briefly but emphatically just why he wished to become a citizen of the United States.

Anthony mounted his Pegasus in an attempt to give a fitting reply. "The hope of the universe," he wrote, "lies in the development of arts and sciences to such a degree that mankind may reach spiritual perfection. Looking around us in the proud twentieth century, where can we find any nation sincerely promoting perfection? In Europe? Only America has abandoned ancient heathen customs and thoughts of conquest, in favor of scientific and industrial progress. It is therefore a worthy ideal to become a member of this nation."

For Camille these pearls of thought were too ambitious. Her own reply was pungent and concise:

"All my life I think I belong to America, because I was born fourth of July."

Chapter 25
CALIFORNIA

ANTHONY'S mind was not completely engaged by his iceboxes. At the end of day, as he trudged back from the Howard plant to their tiny flat, he found himself beset by an old restiveness and a familiar urge for creative work. It was the curse that haunted every inventor's soul.

Before long Camille bowed once again to this need by clearing his bedroom of non-essentials so that he could set up another laboratory where he might putter to his heart's content. In no time at all Anthony recaptured the gentle frenzy that went into the making of each bit of apparatus, from carefully wrapped electric transformers to well-tempered chemical retorts. Henceforth his sanctum buzzed with humming wires, sparks and bubbles, reminiscent of the Berlin days.

Radio was just making its début in a tense, fast-moving post-war world. The air echoed and re-echoed with alternately joyous or bloodcurdling sounds. Skeptics shook their heads in doubt, vowing that the whole idea was doomed from the start, since receiving sets were too expensive and could never be brought within the buying range of the common man.

Anthony could not be numbered among these doubters. On the contrary, he tingled with excitement at the potentialities that lay dormant in this newest discovery of science. As yet the wireless transmitted only sound, conveying it *simultaneously* around the globe. But light waves were equally transmissible, so that paintings, photographs and actual scenes taken from life ought to be sent through space with not less ease or clarity. Telephotography. Television. These would come in their own time. And this was only the beginning, since *consecutive* transmission would one day be possible, whereby actions or scenes could be picked up long after they had happened. Was it not proved that energy never dies? Were not sound waves and light rays imperishable? The voices of Shakespeare and of Goethe, the faces of Caesar, Napoleon, Kant—all lingered somewhere in the eternal ether. It was but a question of finding the wave length that unlocked the past in order to project it into this present. That feat accomplished, man might go further still and rob the future of its secrets by achieving interplanetary

communication with worlds more ancient than the earth, whose past course might throw light upon our own, yet to come. . . .

Occasionally Camille listened to these rhapsodies and trembled. It seemed to her that Anthony's dreaming moved in a sphere utterly beyond her ken. In fact, she was beginning to feel awed and vaguely alarmed by the phenomenon known as "inventive genius." Was there no limit to these flights of fancy? Did not the mind that plunged heedlessly into the imponderable cosmos consume itself in these dangerous fires of thought?

Of late, Anthony returned from work with divers colleagues and acquaintances, who retired with him into his laboratory and could be heard conversing far into the night. After their departure he often remained at his drafting table, making sketches and blueprints which they picked up the next day.

"Who are these people?" Camille asked, disturbed.

His eyes shone. "They are inventors, like myself," he said, "but they do not know how to draw, so I make their sketches for them."

She still did not understand. "What for? Why do they not build models as you do, and then get their patents?"

He was very patient with her. "Some inventions are complicated and expensive," he explained. "Before they can be built it is necessary to get funds. Inventors are generally poor, so they must find someone to sponsor them."

Camille remembered her days in the theatre. "Ah," she exclaimed, "a patron!"

"Yes, only here in America he is called a backer because he finances the enterprise and takes over half ownership."

"But the drawings?"

"They are the bait with which to catch the backer. He always wants to *see* the invention, like a machine that is photographed. But the inventor has only an idea, and ideas cannot be photographed. So one must give them form with paper and ink, in order to fascinate the backer and cause him to open his purse. You understand?"

Camille understood. But understanding did not give her peace of mind, for presently Anthony's circle widened and the number of callers increased by the week. His expert draftsmanship and technical training gained for him an enviable reputation as well as a new source of income. Orders poured in not only from individuals but from manufacturing firms as well, until these supplementary earnings far surpassed his Howard salary. So he gave up iceboxes altogether and went into business for himself as a free-lance draftsman and consulting engineer.

During this period, when daily callers wore out the carpet in her narrow hall, Camille had ample opportunity to study the species: scientist. Precocity leaned dangerously toward the erratic. Particularly was this true in the case of inventors, most of whom appeared to be the embodiment of contradiction. An invention hardly ever

matched the profession of its creator: a dentist devised a collapsible umbrella, a priest offered a new type of hypodermic needle, a cobbler knew how to construct a gambling device that recognized and firmly rejected false coins, a schoolteacher demonstrated a special gas mask for the protection of coal miners, a farmhand contrived a lifebelt, and a trombone player added his mite to the discovery of hydraulic brakes.

Often as not men spent more than a decade perfecting a brain child, only to despair at the final result, for creatures of the mind can be as misshapen and hopeless as those born of flesh. The cretin and the idiot were spawned in the world of thought, quite as frequently as they appeared in human guise, and the laughter evoked by their absurdity was colored with the same dramatic undertones.

Again and again Camille witnessed the tragi-comic demonstration of some fantastic contrivance which, when finished, was of no earthly use. Thus a young man, who was himself terrified of water, invented a machine that propelled his arms and legs in the best Olympic fashion, but since it worked only on dry land its aid to swimming was nil. Another creative genius, this time a woman, was determined to solve the automobile parking problem by means of a rotating wheelbase that would permit sidling up to the curb at right angles; the fact that such construction would add to the insecurity of steering at high speeds had not occurred to her. Again there was a Polish inven-

tor, languid in temperament, who longed for a machine that sliced, toasted and buttered his bread at will; but the apparatus he evolved for this purpose demanded so much manipulation that a simple knife and butter plate would have been easier. (During the first public demonstration of this mechanism the toast emerged not only buttered but heavily oiled by the machinery, though this did not prevent the beaming Pole from devouring it in ecstasy.)

Whether brainstorm of this sort ever took marketable form or not, they cluttered up the patent offices of the world, demanding filing space and solemn legal protection against theft. Of no use in themselves, they consumed an inconceivable amount of government-paid clerical time.

In contrast to so-called solo inventions were those of a composite nature, evolved by several collaborating individuals and often by the whole personnel of a factory workshop. In such instances, even more than in the case of individual creation, it was difficult to obtain comprehensive patent drawings. For this reason Anthony was swamped with orders from various manufacturers whose plants underwent constant improvement in their mechanical equipment as well as in the quality of their wares. For the firm of Fernholz & Co. in Los Angeles he designed a heavy duty machine for the pressing of briquettes; the Concrete Tile Factories at Pasadena entrusted him with the development of a new glazing process; a Glendale

printer ordered drawings for a simplified hand press; and a prosperous funeral director wished to obtain patents for a combination hearse and ambulance that looked like a limousine. Again, the Agar Company in San Diego required a special tool for the use of divers in the harvesting and cutting of deep-sea plants from which a gelatinous medicinal product was obtained; Anthony was able to follow their specifications and to supply a model instrument for the purpose. Naturally, in each of these cases he received a generous fee for his execution of the drawings, but he had no share in the patent rights because the initial idea for each invention had originated with the client. Thus an obscure little man who believed that troublesome insects could be electrocuted by means of a super-charged outdoor lantern, though he had no knowledge of how it might be constructed, came to Anthony for advice; the drawings were done in a single afternoon and the patent was granted without a moment's hesitation, once a demonstration had been given. Today the "magic lantern" is universally used to char mosquitoes and other insect pests, but the draftsman who actually solved the problem had no part in the "inventor's" millions.

It was at this time that the Los Angeles Institute for the Blind experimented with varied ideas for a typing machine that would write in Braille. The director of the institute, Mr. Atkinson, approached Anthony with the pro-

ject, putting at his disposal all the practical information that had been gleaned in the institute's own workshop. On the basis of this experimental knowledge Anthony constructed a typewriter now in use at virtually every blind school in the United States. The work was arduous, requiring one assembly drawing and eighty-two detail sheets, but the result brought ample financial rewards for the institute as well as high praise from the Remington Company which took over the patent. Mr. Atkinson's inmates remained partial beneficiaries of all patent royalties, from which Anthony received a very handsome commission.

Altogether these were happy and exciting days, filled with hope and activity. But they were also days of overwork and exhaustion, because of the speed with which orders had to be executed so as not to drive impatient clients to some competing draftsman in need of a job. Although they were now American citizens, Camille and Anthony were still terrified of penury in a land where they felt it their duty to be paying guests. No, they must not turn a single prospect from their door; if necessary, they must work in watches, turning night into day.

This routine did not hurt Camille, since her tasks were at best simple and mechanical, but for Anthony the mental strain became too much. In time he could not close his eyes without seeing cogwheels turning, wires spinning, tongues of flame leaping through the dark. His ears

hummed with the incessant drone of his laboratory workshop, while his lips moved in monotonous repetition of some cryptic formula. Often he awoke at night, reciting the basic difference between the French metric and the English yard systems of measurement; this was a matter that troubled him sorely, as it did all technical engineers who had been brought up on kilos, liters or centimeters and who must now deal in pounds, quarts and inches. Fatigue settled on him like some evil spook, twisting his reason and causing him to be confounded by the simplest computations which in normal circumstances would have been child's play.

But he fought down fatigue and braced himself against weakness. At last he was beginning to make a place for himself; only a little longer and he would be established as a master in his field, ready to take on a team of assistants. He envisioned himself at the head of an inventors' clearinghouse, as it were, where men from all over the world might send their inchoate schemes and projects, to have them clarified and shaped into practical reality, or else tested and doomed as worthless.

Even while working on routine orders from outside, some of which took many weeks to solve, he continued on the side to experiment with his wireless idea—the radio that would reach back to Sophocles and Shakespeare. Food, drink or exercise meant nothing; his goddess was work.

Three and a half years went by at this mad pace and then, at last, Nature had her revenge. On a morning in April of 1924 Anthony broke down in a jibbering fit, his nerves completely shattered. A doctor was called in who prescribed rest and outdoor life, preferably at some quiet retreat in the country.

The country! For Camille the words carried a familiar enchantment that was reminiscent of wide *Puszta* ranges in Hungary and golden fields of billowing wheat. Yes, why not the country? Anthony had always been an outdoor child; it was the shut-in existence he had led during the past few years that threatened to destroy him. By all means, they must get away from Los Angeles and that infernal laboratory, before it finished him altogether. It was a sickness, this creative urge that left a man no peace. All inventors had it.

For some time past Camille's attention had been captivated by the beautiful real-estate advertisements that appeared daily in the Los Angeles newspapers. All California, it seemed, was for sale at a dazzling bargain. This was the tempting era of credit buying, with no down payments and all in easy installments. According to the land agents it was possible for the impecunious to "own" a brand-new house and garden for no more than the monthly rent. In other sections of the state, San Diego for example, a considerable acreage of fruit-growing farmlands could be had for next to a song. Well, Anthony's hard labor

had earned him a pot of savings, which now might unlock the gates to health and freedom, both of which he sorely needed.

Resolutely Camille clipped photographs and coupons that promised booklets with further information in exchange for a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Her inquiries soon brought results, as a flock of agents stormed her door. While Anthony lay abed, his nerves quieted by opiates, she toured the environs of Santa Monica, Burbank, Long Beach, escorted by a team of jabbering real-estate salesmen bent on making her sole owner of Los Angeles County. But their high-pressure methods in the end brought on defeat, for Camille, dazzled by so many tempting offers, became confused and found herself unable to make a choice. It was Anthony who, convalescing on a couch, one day examined her array of clippings and came upon the luring *Fata Morgana* that sent Camille scurrying to Spring Valley, outside San Diego, in the La Mesa Irrigation District. Here, according to the real-estate pamphlets, a great ranch, that had belonged to the defunct historian, Bancroft, was being cut up into small segments and offered for sale at laughably low prices. The center portion, with its twenty-three royal palms and ancient Spanish abode homestead, would be open for inspection the following Sunday.

It was a case of love at first sight. Squatting in a wilderness of tropic flora, the Bancroft acres stretched from

Mount Helix and its open-air ravine theatre to the far slopes of Grossmont, where Ernestine Schumann-Heink lived on a vast crumbling estate.

Having met the great Schumann-Heink years before in Paris, Camille hastened to pay a call, partly to renew old acquaintance but also to ask a few pertinent questions. If the famous singer, now retired and allegedly in straitened circumstances, could afford to dwell in this remote paradise, the inducements offered by the land agents must be real.

It was a happy meeting, during which the imposing diva embraced her petite colleague of yore in a gigantic bear hug. "So!" she cried in her roaring contralto. "You are in America too! And it is not what they used to say in France '*le pays des déclassés*', eh?"

"Ah, no!" was Camille's devout reply. "It is a storybook land. . . ."

They settled down to a good *Kaffeeklatsch*, with stale cinnamon cake (Madame had no cook) and a jigger of arrack to top off the feast. And after reminiscing for three hours, digging up old European gossip and pondering a changing world in which they were no longer quite at home, Camille delicately turned the conversation to the subject of Spring Valley. It was beautiful here, but very expensive, no? To live in such lovely country, one must be rich? . . .

"Rich!" Madame Heink shook with laughter until her

eyes glistened with tears and she was forced to hold her aching sides. "I have not earned a dollar since—ah, since Caruso's day!"

Camille was puzzled. She had heard of Madame Heink's great losses through hapless investments and even more hapless family misfortunes. The wealth accumulated throughout a long and glorious career had all but vanished.

"But—er—how do you manage to—" her hand made an automatic Sarah Bernhardt gesture of eating.

Madame Heink pointed through an open window. "Look," she said contentedly: "I pluck fruit from those banyan, fig and avocado trees."

Camille's pupils widened with delight. "My brother Anthony always wanted to be a vegetarian!" she exclaimed. "Now he shall have his wish."

Madame Heink smiled with pleasure the while she patted her huge frame. "I do not miss the pounds I have lost," she declared. "I used to be so fat that a London critic, who did not like me, wrote of my concert in the Albert Hall, 'The mighty Ernestine rolled on the stage like a two-decker omnibus.' Well, he should see me now! Only, today, without a Wagnerian bosom, I am also without voice."

Again the two women embraced and walked arm in arm through the neglected garden that wound uphill toward the road. At the gate stood a parked roadster, with

a dapper employee of the San Diego Real-Estate Corporation asleep at the wheel. At sound of the women's voices he snapped back to reality, blinked his eyes brightly and turned on the ignition.

"Ready?" he beamed, as Camille clambered in beside him.

She nodded, her face dimpling with joy. "Ready," she repeated in an exultant tone. "You may bring the papers tomorrow and we shall sign."

Chapter 26

THE GOPHER FARM

THERE is a well-known Hungarian farce entitled *Two Happy Days*, dealing with the purchase of a house and, by the grace of God, its ultimate disposal. Camille could not remember how many times during her repertory days in Pressburg she had sung her way through this popular comedy. While she was hurrying back to Anthony's sickroom a strain from its theme song drifted oddly into her mind:

"'Tis fine to own some property,
But finer to throw it away . . ."

Was this an omen? Were she and Anthony destined to endure the wild assortment of calamities that befell the characters in the play, until they fled their premises and

joined a gypsy caravan? Nonsense. Her heart yearned for stability and a quiet haven of rest. She and Anthony had sprung from the landed gentry of upper Hungary and Slovakia; the call of the soil was their natural heritage.

By midsummer all plans were completed and Anthony's doctor declared himself sufficiently satisfied with his patient's condition to permit the trip. The transfer was made in the San Diego agent's automobile, since the firm, eager to collect the first payment, continued to shower Camille with courtesies. Trunks and furniture followed by truck.

The original idea had been to move straight into the adobe house which sprawled invitingly in the Southern California sun. But a small misunderstanding over price marred this idyllic dream. The ancient dwelling, built by a legendary sea captain from lumps of clay and the beams of his shipwrecked galley, was not included in the purchase of the land. Camille's faulty English must be blamed for the confusion, inasmuch as the tract they had negotiated for did include a small cabin formerly used by ranch hands on the estate.

"The Bancroft abode is just beyond your boundary," the agent pointed out, "but it may be had at a bargain for an additional two thousand dollars."

Since this was far more than they had planned to spend in the first place, Anthony and Camille decided to make use of the cabin. Its Mexican thatched roof and low-beamed ceiling lent a note of picturesque rusticity, until

a week of unexpected showers disclosed a few major flaws. For one thing, the thatching was riddled with holes through which the rain poured in thin rivulets; for another, the reedy walls swayed with every gust of wind.

"'Tain't safe," muttered a derelict hobo, whom Camille discovered, on the day of their arrival, hiding on the premises. His name was Seth MacDonnell and he claimed to have served as gatekeeper on the Bancroft ranch for "nigh onto fifty years." Due to a certain disarming quality in his weatherbeaten face she had obeyed a merciful impulse and allowed him to stay on. Whatever his past, the hollow eyes, sunken chest and tattered jeans bore testimony to a most distressing present. If his last vestige of self-respect was buoyed up by the gatekeeper fable Camille would not be the one to puncture it. Thus, when the irate land salesman ordered the oldster off the place, threatening to call the police, she declared abruptly:

"Let him remain. Since he was gatekeeper for Mr. Bancroft, he can be the same for us."

Her kindness was rewarded in manifold ways. Thenceforth Seth MacDonnell became her abject slave, trotting faithfully in her shadow with his face lighted by the rapt expression of a starved but doting hound. He lent a helping hand with every task, taking over all the heavy chores of wood chopping and water carrying, as well as the cleaning and refilling of oil lamps, for the cabin lacked all modern utilities.

"Does the big house have electric lights?" asked Camille, pointing to the adobe across the line.

"No'm," said MacDonnell reflectively, "she's jest the same as this shack here."

Camille was baffled. "But how did that Mr. Bancroft manage?"

Seth scratched his head. "Them writers," he ventured, "they sit and write all day, and when it's dark they sit and think." This did not solve anything, but it closed the subject.

Most useful proved Seth's presence on the day the thatched roof caved in and they were all drenched in a sudden downpour. Anticipating precisely such a dilemma, Seth had cleared a hollow in an old mesquite thicket where he had built a shelter of corrugated iron. Cots and dry blankets could be transported thither without delay. A piece of tarpaulin served as a curtain behind which Anthony was left wrapped in coverlets, while Camille and Seth sloshed back and forth, salvaging food and clothes.

After the deluge Seth MacDonnell had an idea. "If you wuz to order lumber and a carload of cee-ment, ma'm," he proposed, squinting under bushy white eyebrows, "I kin build you a right purty house."

"You are a mason?" Camille gasped.

"I sure am," he said proudly, "and a Holy Roller too."

She sent a silent prayer of thanks to heaven. The cabin would need rebuilding from the ground up, a prospect that

had filled her with dismay; after all, Anthony's purchase of a modest country retreat had allowed no appropriation for the erection of a house. But God watched over them, that was a certainty. How else was she to explain the presence of that undaunted jack-of-all-trades, Seth MacDonnell, who, though spindly as a reed, proved an oak to lean on in time of need?

As soon as dry weather came she hurried to San Diego to make the necessary purchases, while Anthony conferred with Seth and drew a map to scale. In the process of designing the proposed remodeled dwelling there arose before his inner eye a memory of the old Remenyik House in Dobsina. Could not the new cabin be built along lines reminiscent of their former home? Hungary was a sunny land with a climate not unlike that of this Pacific area; its architecture would be quite suitable to California weather.

To be sure, the rebuilt cabin could bear only a remote resemblance to the original that had inspired Anthony's drawing. When finished it might be no more than a clapboard miniature of the ancient mansion that had once served as a medieval stronghold against Serbs and Turks, but pictorially a bit of Danube design would have been transplanted to this new world.

The work was slow and tedious. Once the foundation had been laid Anthony decided that they would have need of a second floor with modern plumbing and all

other utilities. This in turn necessitated application to the county authorities for an extension of the light and water mains. These improvements entailed considerable expense, but they likewise enhanced the value of the property.

After four months of steady labor the reconditioned ranch cabin could not be recognized. True, the interior was unfinished and crude in its rugged, unpainted state, but dignity characterized the outer lines. The entrance to the little house, with its columned portico and double doors, could not have been more impressive if it had been carved in stone or Dobruja marble.

Having laid aside his trowel, Seth MacDonnell turned presently to other matters.

"'Tis a blamed shame to waste good land like this," he mused informatively. "'Twouldn't be no kind of chore to start an orchard and a vegetable garden."

Again Camille gave heed exultantly. Her mind reverted to childhood and the productive acres of Grandfather Samuel Hus, who, though not a farmer himself, had been lord over fertile properties. Could she not duplicate here in this bright land the flowering beauty of her former province?

With Seth trailing asthmatically behind her, she visited neighboring farms and bargained for young plants and shoots, as well as every manner of seedling. Each morning Anthony, who was growing stronger day by day, hoed another row of earth in which the small trees were neatly

embedded. Before long there were rows of avocado, apricot, peach, pear, orange, apple and fig trees, carefully marked with tiny shields (this for the benefit of the amateur planters who had never grown anything before).

Beyond the orchard a model truck garden also took shape. Here lettuce, radishes, onions, rhubarb and cabbages were set in orderly array. Cucumbers, string beans, carrots and celery formed an outer border. Camille's head began to swim as she surveyed this vast conglomeration, but Seth was far from through. He had yet in mind to lay out a cornfield, a potato bed (Irish), a grove of walnut trees, cantaloupe vines and a substantial patch of watermelons. Needless to say, these were all things that Seth enjoyed eating.

"Might as well try everything," he said philosophically, "and find out what grows best in this-here soil."

"You mean, you don't *know*?" asked Camille, faintly disturbed. She had somehow taken the old hobo for a native Westerner; he had come with the landscape, like the grass and the giant palms that were scattered over the place.

"No'm," was Seth's reply, "I'm from down east. Vermont."

"Oh—" Now she truly became alarmed. What if MacDonnell's horticultural extravaganza ended in failure? A tidy sum of money would have been expended on nothing.

"We're a-goin' to see, that's sure," was his only comment, against which there seemed to be no argument.

From now on life became a timorous adventure as with each dawn they strolled over their ground and dreamed of the coming harvest. Already Seth was hammering at a little fruit and vegetable stand which he intended to set up by the roadside, where tourists, grocers and other potential customers passed in a daily stream. Though poor at figures, he kept up an incessant babble of calculations, prophesying great profits from the enterprise.

Camille grew cheerful. Before long, she realized, they would have need of an income, since the Los Angeles savings were being slowly drowned in a wide pool of costly irrigation. Due to the proximity of desert wastelands, water was at a premium in this part of California. At the start of their opulent planting venture neither Anthony nor his sister (nor Seth, for that matter) had given the slightest thought to this question. Had not the fierce cloudbursts that threatened to wash them away during the first week of their arrival given indication that the heavens would provide more than the needful supply of moisture? It would have seemed preposterous to worry about the price of water when this element poured down so prodigally from above!

But the rainy season was over and the drought that followed it proved as vehement in its intensity as ever the wet spell had been. From the edge of far Death Valley and

the Mojave Desert a hot wind blew southward into the flats of Sonora, scorching everything in its path. Fruit growers dreaded this time of year, for it compelled them to choose between an exorbitant outlay for piped water (it was against the law to dig a well of one's own, even on private property) or the loss of an entire season's crop. Only experienced farmers, who knew how to husband their resources, were able to laugh at the elements and come through unscathed.

Like their neighbors round about, Anthony and Camille bowed to necessity and paid the enormous water tax. After sundown, when the sky glowed for hours with the refraction of dust-laden rays, they turned the hose on their small cultivated fields, only to see the water ripple away amid the bulging roots of the ubiquitous palms. Here was something the real-estate agent had not told them: the tropic giants with their fan-shaped fronds greedily soaked up every drop of moisture that came within their radius. While other portions of the Bancroft land flourished in rich abundance, the central section—dominated by the palms—had long been barren of everything else. Beguiled by outward beauty (and the thought of receiving twenty-three full grown betel palms for nothing) Anthony and Camille had saddled themselves with a white elephant.

To add to their distress they now discovered an ever-increasing network of gopher holes spreading over their

terrain. Spring Valley, like most agricultural regions elsewhere, found itself periodically overrun by burrowing pests that called for the most ruthless measures of extermination. At the start of the gopher "season" farmers combined in fighting the plague and usually succeeded in conquering it. But Camille and her brother, ignorant of even the first steps in this type of warfare, failed to check the pests and were soon engulfed by them. Correspondingly as neighboring farms were cleared, the gopher holes in Seth MacDonnell's small orchard multiplied. It now became apparent why this central slice of the famed Bancroft Ranch had lain idle for so many years and why at last it had been sold for almost nothing. Whoever took up farming here would see his labor and his savings sucked under into the subsoil tunnels that went down to a depth of thirty feet. All plants with shallow roots were thus permanently deprived of needed moisture.

Camille made several brave attempts to join the anti-gopher campaign. Heeding the advice of well-meaning neighbors, she placed poison at the entrance of the burrows; this caused the victims to die near the surface, creating an abominable stench. Again, she set up traps during the night, but in these the hapless animals squirmed halfdead for hours in excruciating pain. She could not endure the sight—rather would she give up the crops than continue this bungling method of destruction. On the other hand, even while she vacillated in mingled pity and

disgust, the prolific creatures reproduced in appalling numbers.

At last Anthony thought of a way out. He dispatched Seth to a near-by automobile junk yard, where discarded machinery could be purchased. After some experimentation the right motor was found and installed at the mouth of the largest burrow, while earth was shoveled over all other openings. Then, as the engine began to run, a steady puff of carbon monoxide passed through the exhaust pipe into the underground gopher town.

The scheme worked. Overcome by the deadly fumes, the animals vanished far below and the plague seemed to have subsided. But this was only temporary. Not only did the hardy survivors beget new stock, but enterprising gophers from neighboring fields (where persecution was fierce and uninterrupted) tunneled their way into the depopulated area and took over the abandoned corridors. Before long, new holes appeared on the surface and the earth bulged afresh with teeming subterranean life.

"*Jeszus, Márial*" sighed Camille in fervent Hungarian, unmindful for the moment of her new allegiance and tongue. "The only enterprise that will flourish on this gopher farm is a fur industry. . . ."

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Chapter 27

DEPRESSION YEARS

BY AUTUMN Seth MacDonnell's prediction had come true. They were finding out what grew best in this soil, or, rather, what did not grow at all and what merely held on to a straggling existence. The truth was that in the domain of the aged Bancroft palms nothing really flourished with any degree of opulence except the one perennial product, gophers.

Row by row Camille's withered seedlings had to be gathered and burned in a pile of dry brush. Avocados, indigenous to California, died before ripening, and a blight fell also upon lettuce, rhubarb, cucumbers and most of the other vegetables with which Seth had intended cutting such a financial swath.

These disappointments seemed all the more painful since round about the fields were rich with produce. In neigh-

boring orchards apricots, apples, peaches and pears plopped to the ground in aromatic abundance. Quite plainly, then, Anthony and Camille came to realize that San Diego County and California at large could not be blamed for their dismal failure. Ignorance, mixed with an incurable romanticism, had led them into this pass. Their guilt was innocence and faith in an absent star.

To offset some of the above vicissitudes, there was a pleasing harvest of citrus fruits: oranges (Navel and Valencia), limes, lemons and grapefruit, as well as figs, which ripened twice a year. To Seth's delight, eighteen large watermelons also survived the gopher raids and the drought. Lastly, there were eight walnut trees, fine and strong, that had taken root; in six years, if all went well, these would bear their first crop of meaty English nuts for which there was always a good price, particularly at Christmas time. In short, by the following spring an important lesson had been learned. Hereafter the planting would be confined to hardy staples like cabbages, carrots and potatoes, while additional citrus trees were lined up to replace the failures.

To be sure, the water problem remained. Its cost far exceeded any profit derived from the first season's harvest, yet it could not be avoided; without water there would be no harvest to come. In order to meet this constant and mounting expense, Anthony took out a mortgage on the property. At the same time, since country air and sun-

shine had restored his health, he planned to take up his work again and to this end made contact with his many former clients. A few letters sent at random to Los Angeles brought an immediate response; orders were waiting for him, if he could call for them in person. This brought up the question of transportation; bus fares from San Diego to the north were expensive, and there was the added distance of twelve miles from Spring Valley to the bus station. Counting up the cost of at least one weekly trip, Anthony reflected that a second-hand car would in the end prove more economical. Better than that—remembering his boat-building days on the Balaton, he decided to construct his own automobile from usable parts purchased in a local junk yard. This brought the outlay down to next to nothing.

Camille accepted the idea with enthusiasm, for she had never forgotten the thrill of riding down Broadway in Jancsika Dolly's Ford roadster with the liveried chauffeur. Ah, she had always known that Anthony was a great man; now he was going to build an automobile!

Putting aside her garden tools and apron, she joined Seth in the hunt for necessary parts. Anthony had made a list of everything he needed and, while he stayed at home fashioning the wooden frame, she made the rounds of every iron yard in San Diego. Before long, wheels, tires, fenders, motor, chassis and an assortment of other paraphernalia were at hand, and after a month's time the

vehicle was assembled. It looked vaguely reminiscent of the good ship *Ancamire* on wheels, what with its cabin-like body and a V-shaped windshield. Its cruising power was astonishing; its color taupe.

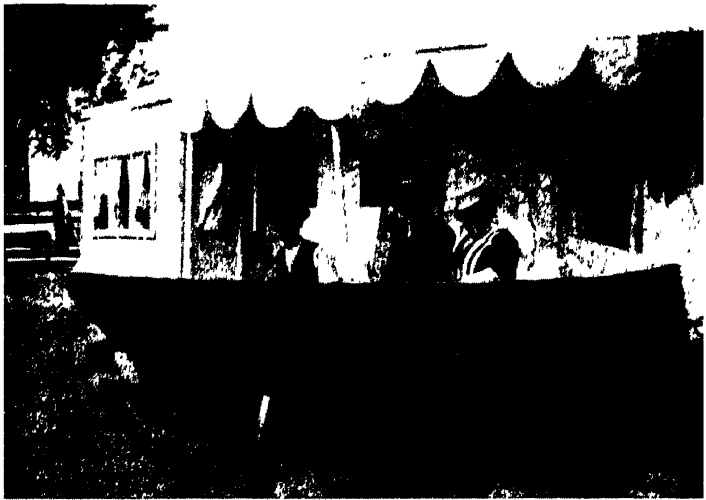
On one of its first trial trips the door fell open and Camille dropped out, but, as she eagerly assured her terrified brother, she was "neither killed nor badly bruised." After a week of nursing a few black and blue spots she went riding with him again, and this time he took all the curves at a gingerly pace, so that no further mishaps occurred.

Even so, that same month Camille was the victim of another accident. While walking along a downtown street in San Diego she was struck by a heavy roll of newspapers thrown from a passing interurban car to a newsstand on a corner. The blow stunned her and she tumbled from the sidewalk into the path of a passing automobile which stopped just in time to miss running over her. She recovered her wits immediately and continued on her way without waiting for the motorman's abject apologies, grateful only that God had spared her. But on returning home she met with vehement reproaches from Seth MacDonnell.

"There wuz your chance, ma'am," he snorted, "to make some real money!"

"What do you mean?" she asked, perplexed.

He told her. First, she should have remained lying mo-



The good ship *Ancamire* in drydock



Anthony's homemade automobile

tionless in a deep faint until an ambulance was called, after which she would have been transported moaning to a hospital. Next, the streetcar company's counsel would have appeared at her bedside, proposing a neat sum—such as ten or twelve thousand dollars—to settle the matter out of court. This could be accepted or rejected, according to one's needs. But in any case, even after "recovering" from the ordeal, it was advisable to collapse occasionally in the presence of witnesses in order to maintain the illusion of permanent injury.

It was really very funny and Camille laughed heartily at what seemed to her a capital joke. That Seth MacDonnell's advice had been completely wasted on her was proved soon after when her best Sunday dress was caught and torn by a badly splintered door to a telephone booth; she called at the Bell Company, where an amiable clerk promised immediate adjustment. But his kindness so disarmed her that she asked for only three dollars with which to buy another panel for her skirt.

As for Anthony's car, it proved a most satisfactory adjunct in the transaction of such business as he could obtain from a limited number of Los Angeles clients. The work did not pay so well as formerly, partly because he could not deliver it as fast, but also because the depression year of 1929 had dawned. Yet his earnings would have sufficed to keep the little household going, had not a calamitous blow struck at them from without. It was a recently

adopted political measure, that known as the Mattoon Act.

According to law, Spring Valley, La Mesa and La Jolla property owners paid for all public improvements, such as the laying of light, water and gas mains, as well as the building of roads up to a distance of five miles. These costs appeared in the annual tax. The Mattoon Act stipulated, moreover, that in case of default on the part of any individual owner, or his dispossession and removal, the remaining ones must meet the difference in cash.

This process, called "pyramiding," led to dire consequences. During the first year Camille and Anthony spent in Spring Valley their taxes amounted to \$120, increasing slightly thereafter to \$130 and \$140. But presently neighboring farmers felt the pinch of poverty. Some fell back in their payments, others went completely bankrupt. If their debts were of a private nature, people found it easy to shirk them together with their tax bill. Anthony and Camille, however, were not in this position. Their mortgage had been obtained through the regular channel of a bank; this meant that they must keep their slates clean and all taxes paid up on schedule if they did not want to lose their land.

In 1927 the tax had risen to \$600, a sum which, even with the aid of Seth's agricultural pursuits, Anthony could not scrape together. Only by means of a second mortgage could this outrageous demand be met.

By 1929 more Valley folk gave up the struggle and refused to meet outlying obligations. That year the postman handed Camille a tax statement for \$1,043, which was more than the entire property had cost in the first place.

The demand struck terror to her soul. She knew that Anthony had no way to raise this sum except by borrowing, and there was no one close enough whom they could importune with so formidable a request. They had no choice but to make another trip to the San Diego bank where the earlier mortgages had been handled. A fresh thousand was signed for and handed to the collector of internal revenue, who pocketed it and went merrily on his way.

To cap these misfortunes, Seth MacDonnell had suddenly got religion. Without warning he went into spiritualistic séances with himself, emerging from them with a glazed and faraway look.

"I got the call," he announced one day after spending several hours mending a fence and singing his full repertoire of Holy Roller hymns. "I got to go into the wilderness to pray."

Camille was baffled. The desolation of Spring Valley seemed to her sufficient wilderness to inspire urgent prayer. What else did Seth want?

"I got to be alone," he said cryptically, "like Saint Simeon What's-His-Name."

And he meant it. Several days later he tied up a blanket

and a well-thumbed Bible, his only earthly possessions, and with a solemn handshake he bade his employers farewell.

"I'm a-headin' fer the desert," were his parting words. "When you get the call you got to go."

For Camille the loss of the lovable old codger was serious indeed. He had been a great help around the place, performing chores for which she might normally have needed three farmhands. As it was, she could not now afford a substitute, even for an afternoon a week. Something called "the Depression" hit America during that year, and Anthony's earning capacity dwindled down to nothing at all. Free-lance inventors had long ago ceased to require his services, since they themselves could not pay for the drawings; most of them were too hungry and barren of ideas to continue with their avocation. Instead they joined the PWA and made sure of at least one decent meal a day. But the great industrial and manufacturing plants, Anthony's *pièces de résistance*, now failed him too. They were curtailing their budgets and cutting down on laboratory appropriations, so that almost no experimentation went on. This meant that he drove desperately around the countryside in search of orders, only to be met with a chorus of regretful refusals.

The home-made car swallowed vast quantities of gasoline which, with no money coming in, would soon create a further crisis. It was in the face of this that Anthony at

last came to a drastic decision. Early in 1933 he put on laborers' jeans.

"Almost every colleague I formerly knew in Los Angeles," he declared resolutely, "works for the PWA. It is something wonderful that the government has arranged. I shall put in an application tomorrow."

Camille supported him in this purpose. Blessed America, she thought with gratitude welling up in her heart; no one needed to starve in such a land as this. One could always work for the government!

The application went through and in a week's time Anthony received an assignment: three streets in San Diego were to be torn up and paved anew. Anthony was to present himself on the following Monday, with overalls, pick and shovel. He was somewhat taken aback, not having dreamed that he would be employed in anything but technical work. He had taken especial pains to submit his qualifications and past record, mentioning the Mittweida diploma with some pride. However, this was no time for quibbling; a job was a job. Armed with his heavy tools Anthony waited for the truck that picked up the workmen at dawn. Jammed in with white men, Negroes, Mexicans and Chinese, he rode the twelve miles to the city where he started "working for the government."

It was hard going. His hands were sensitive, his muscles untrained, and the merciless sun that swept its white beams far out to sea blinded his weak myopic eyes. But he

clung doggedly to his post, ignoring blistered palms and soles, as well as sorely aching back. Other men, many of them belonging to the so-called white-collar class, were doing the same; he was as capable as they. Was not this better than to stand in a breadline, waiting for charity?

Camille, too, was not idle. Though there was no money to pay for irrigation, some of her fruit trees managed to tide over through the long dry season and to afford her a modest crop. During the fig harvest she sold her entire output of three dozen baskets; prices of course were low, since everyone else had figs at the same time. She likewise carried oranges and limes to market, but her fruit was puny from lack of moisture.

Without Seth MacDonnell's help it was useless to try her hand at further farming, but she soon had her eye on something else. Did not the PWA employ women too? She applied at once and presently found herself called by the Federal Theatre's costume department, where she was put to work with needle and thread, fashioning stage attire for hopeful but half-starved players. She loved this occupation, putting into it all her imaginative soul. Once, while costuming a nervous and pallid prima donna, she hurried home and fetched the yellowed fan given her in Pressburg by the Archduchess Isabella; it lent a graceful and romantic note to an otherwise drab ensemble. It also proved a fortunate impulse, for that very night vandals ransacked the small Bancroft Ranch and made off with

most of her clothes, as well as every bite of food that had been hoarded in the kitchen.

This experience made her realize that she and Anthony could not both be away from home at the same time. Reluctantly she left the Federal Theatre workshop and went back to her fruit trees. Walnuts would soon be ripe for the first time, and people round about assured her that a good penny was to be earned from this source.

Anthony continued to dig ditches in the heart of San Diego's business district. The city was dolefully calm during this period, so that a mock saying made the rounds: "San Diego needs no cemeteries; the dead walk up and down the streets."

It was due to this dismal state of affairs that the local chamber of commerce began, early in 1934, to promote plans for a possible exposition. If business could not be revived by any other means there remained always the ancient Roman prescription: Bread and Circuses. Slowly the scheme won approval from dejected merchants who admitted that all other avenues to a return of prosperity seemed closed.

For Anthony this project offered a most hopeful outlook. As soon as definite discussions were under way there would be need for expert artists and draftsmen to lay out a plan for the exposition grounds and its main buildings. Already his name had been listed among those under consideration, since PWA officials were fully aware

that many an expert technician was to be found on their pay roll in the guise of a humble day laborer.

But the exposition plans were two years getting started, and Anthony's physical strength did not hold out that long. The heavy work from early morning until sundown, coupled with sleeplessness caused by overexhaustion, became too much for his frail constitution. Undernourishment added to his débâcle, since a decade of the most painful economies had led to serious diet deficiencies. For years brother and sister had survived on nothing but potatoes for their principal meal; more recently, when coffee became too dear a luxury, they experimented with substitutes, using first *yerba buena* (wild mint leaves) and dried potato peelings from which to make a brew. The potion thus concocted cost nothing but the gas for heating, and it indubitably warmed the stomach; but it contained no nutriment whatever. Camille, at work in her orchard all day, was able to sustain herself with fruits and nut meats; hers was a naturally vegetarian organism. Anthony on the other hand could take no citrus juices, because of violent attacks of heartburn occasioned by them. As his state of general derangement advanced he was hardly able to digest anything but milk.

After a year with the PWA he fainted one morning on the street and was brought home by a member of the crew, a kindly graybeard named Moody.

"The foreman wanted to send him to the county hos-

pital," said Mr. Moody as Camille opened the door, "but I didn't think you'd like that, ma'am."

She nodded frantically. Of course Anthony must never be taken to the county hospital where all the charity cases ended up in long narrow wards that looked like kennels at a fair. She must protect him from this last indignity.

"Anything I can do?" asked Mr. Moody, twisting his cap and making ready to go.

"Thank you," she said, "you have done so much already."

He saw her worried look. "I guess there's nothing really wrong," he added hopefully; "just overcome by the heat, kinda. We get lots of cases like that in August."

After the man had left she put Anthony to bed, pondering all the while what to do next. Was there not some miraculous way out of all this misery? Her old friend, Ernestine Schumann-Heink, had only recently been lifted from poverty and obscurity to new heights of triumph; by a freak run of luck she had been rediscovered by the movie czars who groomed the white-haired diva for a final climax before the cameras. Could not she, Camille, do something of the sort?

Alas, the name Fehér de Vernet meant nothing in America. Though highly successful in Europe, she had never—even in her mature glory—been a star of international magnitude; her career had been cut short too early for that. She had given up security and fame in

order to nurture and watch over Anthony's genius, believing his destiny more noble than her own.

Had she done wrong? Never, she assured herself. As he lay before her now, bedridden and almost defeated by life, not the slightest doubt beset her mind or dimmed her faith in his merit. At no time did she suspect even faintly that the exalted worth she always saw in Anthony might conceivably not be there; what she knew and told herself a thousand times over was that the world had failed to recognize it. For it was unthinkable that material success should be the only measure of man's capabilities.

Years later Camille was to read in the scientific journal of Marie Curie the very words which she herself had felt, though not articulated. "Humanity," wrote the great discoverer of radium, "certainly needs practical men, who get the most out of their work, and without forgetting the general good, safeguard their own interests. But humanity also needs dreamers, for whom the disinterested development of an enterprise is so captivating that it becomes impossible for them to devote their care to their own material profit. . . . Without the slightest doubt, these dreamers do not deserve wealth, because they do not desire it. Even so, a well-organized society should assure to such workers the efficient means of accomplishing their task, in a life freed from material care and freely consecrated to research."*

* From *Madame Curie: A Biography*, by Eve Curie, copyright, 1937, by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.

Here was the scholarly viewpoint, marking the truly civilized mind. How much more, indicated Madame Curie, could she and her husband Pierre have done for mankind, had they not been hampered and dogged by direst poverty! Like Anthony they had known futility and despair, though unlike him they were briefly vouchsafed the dazzling splendor of a sublime destiny. Yet even this arrived too late to forestall heartbreak and hidden regrets.

As for Camille's own fleeting nostalgia for the stage, and her yearning to recapture like Schumann-Heink an echo of the past, she dismissed the thought almost as soon as it was born. She knew it to be altogether too fantastic and preposterous. The film world bought two commodities: young, white flesh—and names. It did not require profound cerebration to conclude that Hollywood could have no possible use for her.

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Chapter 28

CAMILLE GOES WALKING

SHE turned to home industry. With Anthony lying abed, she set up a small workshop in his room so that he could aid her in fashioning various articles for sale. From sheets of inexpensive tin he cut out intricate patterns for porch and hall lanterns which were to be electrically wired. Late in October Camille carried half a dozen of these to a shop in San Diego, where a kindly merchant ordered a second supply for his Christmas stock. She bought more tin and presently the next batch was finished, but the shopkeeper's needs were now covered and she had to look elsewhere for more trade. Altogether Anthony made twenty-eight lamps, all of which were sold at the modest price of one dollar apiece.

From the scraps of leftover tin Anthony next con-

structed miniature Christmas trees, to be used as table decorations. Again Camille trotted hopefully to town, hitch-hiking part of the way when some friendly truck driver offered her a lift, which in turn necessitated giving up one of the little trees as a token of gratitude. But every trinket was sold, and there were calls for more until, with the passing of the holiday season, her pleasant wind-fall subsided.

In February of the following year she persuaded a junk dealer to buy the car (they had got it from a junk heap) and shortly after she ordered the gas cut off as a means of further economy. Since most of the victuals she and Anthony could now afford were eaten raw there was no need for cooking. An electric hot-plate warmed the kettle when water was needed for tea or potatoes.

Economy such as this cut down expenses but it brought in no money, so before long she had to look for a new source of income. Fortunately the figs were ripening and she could count on at least a dozen baskets from her neglected orchard, where the indestructible weed known as "devil grass" had reached a veritable jungle growth.

She garnered a generous supply of fruit and stored it in shallow hampers. Each morning, burdened with her wares and a portable scale, she scuttled to town and went from door to door offering her figs. It was a deeply mortifying journey, for no one is held in deeper contempt than the desolate creatures who go canvassing a neighborhood

from house to house. A scowl is most often the answer to their greeting and a slammed door the echo to their meek farewell. But she endured each galling humiliation, knowing that people who stand on opposite sides of a threshold have no way of judging each other. Patiently she trudged on, lifting her small hand (a hand that had touched that of an emperor, of Liszt, Bernhardt and Duse) to ring another bell, and holding her chin up to meet pity or insult with the same composure.

After the figs the Bancroft land gave nothing more to sell. But in an old newspaper, picked up on a streetcar, Camille spied another hope: a San Francisco firm handling mercury for medical uses (particularly in dentistry) looked for salespeople throughout the state to distribute the valuable element for a moderate commission. She applied immediately for a job and obtained it. Since a deposit of ten dollars had to be made as security for the first shipment of mercury, she sold her last piece of jewelry, an old-fashioned gold watch.

Her daily trips now took in a wider radius: San Diego, Coronado, National City, Chula Vista, La Jolla. Again circumstances seemed to combine against her, for office buildings everywhere were equipped with placards reading: "No agents or solicitors allowed." But she soon overcame this obstacle. Carrying her supply of mercury tucked neatly away in a reticule, she stepped into the elevator and sailed calmly up to the top floor. Here she methodically

drummed her way through every dentist's waiting room or outer office, working one floor at a time and using the stairs for her descent. On the last flight she waited for the elevator to be out of sight before making a dash for the street.

Strangely, no one ever reported her either to the management of a building or the police. Her petite person and ingratiating manner, combined with a disarming accent, served to unlock doors and hearts. The quick patter of her feet, swift as the mercury she sold, carried her far, so that she was able to build up a chain of faithful customers who soon depended on her for their needs.

It was odd about her accent. In each land she had ever visited people had taken her for something else, so mystifying was the timbre of her childhood Dobsina dialect. In Hungary, theatre audiences had applauded her as a Slovak importation; Berlin took her for a full-blooded Magyar; Paris considered her Germanic in origin, while in England and America she was looked upon as French.

One phase of her "mercury career" never ceased to baffle her—the courtesy of men in business. After the shabby treatment she had learned to expect from irritable housewives at whose doors she had knocked in vain, the humanity of the masculine workaday world became a revelation. Even the harassed dentists who bought two dollars' worth of goods from her took time to smile and to greet her with a polite "Madame," while now and then

one of them bowed from the waist. This gesture, she suspected, was only a concession to her diminutive stature (she had passed her sixtieth birthday and was growing smaller with the years) but the very kindness that inspired it swelled her timid heart so that she never failed to respond with the air of a *grande dame*.

To be sure, it was difficult to remain a lady with scuffed footwear and holes in one's soles. But she got around that too. Keeping her only pair of respectable shoes wrapped in a package under her arm, she tramped the streets in broken down boots, but made a quick change as soon as she entered a building. She also carried a small clothes-brush in her pocket so as to keep her dress free from lint and dust—in Hungary there was a saying "A touch of coquetry is not amiss"—ever since childhood days Camille had been fastidious. She had a horror of slovenly old people and she secretly promised herself that, were she to reach a Biblical age, she would always remain scrupulously dainty.

Her incredible industry bore fruit; she earned four dollars, sometimes five, a week. She covered many miles of territory on feet that never grew weary, or rather, that ached but were spurred on to further effort by an indomitable spirit that governed her whole being. Her little head, its thinning hair pinned into strategic ringlets, was carried bravely in the clouds.

However, the relative prosperity she achieved during



Camille on one of her mercury-selling expeditions

this period (permitting her to set butter and an occasional strip of bacon on the table) was destined to be of short duration, because of Anthony's steady decline. He had begun to show the first symptoms of pellagra, the disease of poverty. His color was ashen and a false puffiness swelled his body, while locomotion became increasingly difficult. He tried to leave his bed during the day, to perform a few chores about the house, but by noon his strength gave out and he dropped in a dead faint. Often when Camille returned to his bedside after her own interminable cross-country trek, she found him rigid and cold. At other times, when he was wide awake, he lay there feverish and frantic, with terror staring from his eyes.

"Where have you been?" he pressed her. "You left me—I thought you were never coming back!"

She comforted him as best she could and tried to laugh away his fears, but the long hours of loneliness closed in upon him and cloaked his soul in darkness. Evil forces began to take shape before his eyes; he felt hunted, pursued.

She realized that she could not leave him thus, at least not during the dank winter months when the dreary California drizzle set in and penetrated every corner of the unheated house with a clammy gloom. So she remained at home, lighting a tiny charcoal brazier and setting it beside his chair. While he gazed at her with tragic and

failing eyes, she read aloud the poetry of Lamartine, of Petöfy and Heine, like themselves spirits of exile and nostalgia.

They drifted thus to the deepest ebb, the absolute low of their existence. The mercury from which Camille had managed to eke out a bare living now rested on the shelf. If Anthony improved, she would go out again and round up her good customers. If not—

Early in 1935 they went on relief. The government was handing out baskets of food, an outright charity which many destitute families had for years been too proud to accept. Anthony and Camille were numbered among these, but matters had now reached a point where it was impossible to hold out longer. It was charity or starvation.

She stole away one afternoon while Anthony slept. Like a beggar she stood in line at relief headquarters, waiting for a basket.

When she received it all her pride and defiance were gone. At sight of food—real food—her eyes lighted up like those of a child under a Christmas tree. Soup, margarine, eggs, beans and bread! Dear God in Heaven, were there such things left on earth?

She stumbled home, twelve miles, no luck with hitch-hiking. Agog and breathless she slipped into the empty kitchen and set down her precious burden, for Anthony must not know what she had done. It would kill him to discover that now they were mendicants, public charges.

"I've been to church," she told him, putting her treasures on the table piecemeal (stretched out so they would last the week without arousing his suspicion).

It was the ladies' sewing day, she elucidated further. Everybody cut garments for needy children and stitched them up in a jiffy, after which a few trifles were handed around—left over from Sunday supper—for people to take home. The committee chairman's feelings would have been frightfully hurt if she had refused.

This story went all right with Anthony. In fact, it went better than the food, for he could no longer digest anything beyond stale bread softened with water. Even the taste of milk gave him convulsions.

She was terrified. Despite his obstinate refusal to see a doctor, whose fee they were in no position to pay, she hurried to the county hospital in search of help. A public-health nurse came to jot down a few statistics, after which two weeks elapsed. In due time Camille received a notice that a cot was free in the charity ward and that Anthony must avail himself of this at once, since there was a long waiting list of equally needy cases.

This was not exactly what she had looked for, though she realized that the penniless have no right to be choosy. But in her effort to obtain medical advice she had hardly anticipated so drastic a step as the abandonment of her brother to a public ward. Did anyone sit at the bedside of a charity case? After an intern's perfunctory walk through

the ward, once a day, not even relatives were allowed except at a fixed hour on some specified afternoon. Anthony could never stand the loneliness and desolation, since even now he could not bear to have her step outside his room. It was the constant refrain of his lament, "Do not leave me!" that shackled her hands, so that she remained powerless in the face of such help as had been offered. Her answer was no. While she felt strong enough to nurse him and to be of spiritual comfort (Anthony's affliction was mental as well as physical, of this she had become certain) it seemed to her a black misdeed to cast him among those forgotten derelicts who died unknown and unattended, save for their common misery.

Miserably she penned a note of thanks and dropped the application, making some vague excuse about a sudden improvement in the patient's condition.

She regretted this step almost as soon as it had been taken, for, at precisely this time, the acute tax question came up again and there was no bank left in San Diego that would grant another mortgage on the indebted Bancroft property. For some time past, Camille had besought several agents to sell the place for whatever might be offered, but there were no prospects for miles around; people in that part of the country knew too much about the accursed Mattoon Act that had fallen as a blight on the district. Not until its repeal could their confidence be regained.

The tax had meanwhile been pyramided to the prepos-

terous figure of \$1,500, in addition to which the loan office threatened foreclosure. Camille was warned that within three months the land and what was on it would be signed over to the bank; she had better look for another home.

She had of late been a regular attendant at the near-by country church. This was partly due to the cold-blooded fact that she must cover up her trips to the relief office where, without Anthony's knowledge, she continued to receive her basket. But she found herself nowadays kneeling down in earnest, praying for help from some source other than human. She had exhausted every other avenue and there was no way to turn.

Oddly, the postman stopped that same week at her door to deliver a registered letter which had been addressed to Detroit and Los Angeles before finally trailing her to this remote corner of earth. It bore an Hungarian postmark and the sender's initials, which she did not recognize. Could this be the answer to her prayers? Perhaps one of the rich Ruffinyi uncles had died, leaving a fortune, and here was a nephew or maybe some remote second cousin (whom she had certainly never met) informing her that she had been named in the will. But even as her overwrought brain toyed with this prospect of sudden inheritance, she recalled her own age. . . . No, it was not likely that she had any surviving uncles in the old country or, indeed, anyone who in these difficult times could leave her an inheritance. It was far more reasonable to assume that the missive contained the usual demands

made by relatives in Europe for funds from this fabulous America where one picked up silver dollars in the street.

Her surmise proved correct. The letter was from a grandson of Aunt Tilka, who reported that the family estates were now under Rumanian jurisdiction and that the once respectable Remenyik fortune had been dissipated by the war. The young boy hoped to gain a foothold in the New World where, he felt certain, Uncle Anthony had meanwhile become a leading industrialist.

"I want only a small job," he wrote confidently; "I can work my way to the top."

She smiled sadly at these trusting words of youth and at the eternal quality of hope. The boy's instinct was right; he knew that the bottom of the ladder was crowded with the elbowing mass, composed of mediocrity, incompetence or just plain ill-fortune. But the pressure lessened with each rung leading upward to the heights from which one could look down on the writhings of humanity. Yes, there was room on the roof of the world, and at one time or another everybody dreamed of sitting there.

Apart from an ingenuous request for a steamship ticket, the letter also contained a smattering of gossip from home. Aunt Tilka's only—and belated—son, Béla, had been divorced three times and had only recently contracted a fourth marriage, but already there was doubt as to the outcome.

No, Camille had not much sympathy to waste on Béla's troubles. The burden she herself was carrying had be-

come so heavy that it made purely temperamental sorrows seem picayune indeed, particularly when they were the obvious pinpricks of a shallow emotionalism. She was growing cynical these days. The indignities imposed by poverty caused all other ills to pale into insignificance.

Was there anything worse than stark, unrelieved want? It warped character and distorted one's outlook on the world until nothing remained but a terrible and all-encompassing fear. Possessing nothing (even their modest furniture served as collateral for a chattel loan), she began to see value in everything. "One must throw nothing away," became her motto as she hoarded bits of string and wrapping paper; "it may be of some use later on." Dry twigs and boards left by the roadside would build a kindly fire in her grate; damaged bars of soap, given away by a San Diego factory, took care of her laundry needs and of the family hygiene. This saved a vestige of her self-respect, which was sorely in need of bolstering.

Before long she had not the heart to discard a single newspaper or coverless magazine of ancient vintage. Were not these gilt-edged securities, to be sold for as many shiny pennies? It was thus that she surrounded herself with that litter so dear to the very poor who, stripped to their naked souls, must fill the yawning emptiness about them with something, as though in cluttered and highly combustible surroundings the sense of dispossession becomes less acute.

"One cannot be," she told herself, "with nothing—*nothing*—in one's hands. . . ."

Chapter 29

RADIO PROGRAM

AS FORECLOSURE of the mortgage loomed daily nearer she appeared more frequently at the church. It permitted her a satisfying argument with God and afforded a sorely needed contact, however superficial, with fellow human beings.

She had always loved people. Throughout Spring Valley she had shown herself neighborly and polite, though never revealing by sign or deed the stringency of her circumstances. Friendly farmers' wives who stopped occasionally for a chat across the fence responded to her courtesy by leaving baskets of fruit and—at rare intervals—a loaf of freshly baked home bread. They were good people hereabouts, made of the stuff that won success. Once the Mattoon Act (against which the whole community stood currently in arms) was beaten, there would be no holding them back.

She felt less certain of Anthony and herself. From the start, the whole idea of farming their own land had been a foolish *Fata Morgana*. Through bitter experience she now knew that it required more than optimism and a romantic urge to wring a living from the soil; it called for knowledge of a highly specialized order and, if possible, an agrarian tradition of several generations. These were two requisites both she and Anthony lacked. As far back as the Turkish invasion of Hungary the Remenyik and Hus families had belonged to the landed gentry, yet never touched a plow. There was an Austrian saying:

“What Johnny doesn’t learn,
John will never know. . . .”

Old proverbs contained more than a grain of truth. Camille needed only to remember the gopher plague and her own inability to fight it, even after she had been shown how. . . . No, she and Anthony could not blame either human or natural forces for their failure; the tragedy had lain within themselves.

It was on her return from the public library one day, as she pondered these things, that a pleasant middle-aged woman named Mrs. Novak spoke to her. Mrs. Novak lived at La Mesa with an ailing daughter, who must be a voracious reader, judging from the heavy books her mother carried back and forth.

"You must visit us," Mrs. Novak opened the conversation. "My daughter can't go out, and she misses talking with you."

Camille remembered the young girl from various church socials to which she had gone in search of relief from the drab tedium of her life. She now was deeply touched by the invitation. If nothing else, she reflected, a visit to a fellow sufferer might restore her own sense of balance, helping her realize that there were other torments quite as bitter as hers and Anthony's. This Mrs. Novak fretted over her child no less than Camille over her brother; the knowledge of their mutual woes seemed to weave a bond of understanding between the two women.

She went to La Mesa one late afternoon in April of 1935, bringing along her frayed book of Lamartine in order to read aloud a few of Anthony's favorite verses. He had marked them, asking her to observe the young lady's reaction to each; the thought of making thereby even the most fleeting contact with the living world seemed to excite him inordinately. It was a gesture doubly poignant, coming as it did from one who had never found time for romance.

Emma Novak lay in a hammock under a shady pepper tree. Her white, transparent hands were held out in eager greeting as Camille approached across the lawn.

"Thank you for coming," the girl said simply. "Mother has been promising to bring you for a long time."

Inside the house a radio blared slightly off station. It had been pushed near an open window so as to be heard in the garden.

"We don't get many stations," Mrs. Novak explained apologetically; "the set is rather old, but we are saving up for a new one."

The girl's face brightened suddenly. "Last night we heard Joseph Henry Jackson, from San Francisco, talking about the new books. He introduced an author—what was her name, Mother?"

Again Mrs. Novak apologized. "We must get another set," she repeated. "The static last night was terrible."

"I think the name was Harding," the girl continued, "though Mother is right—we could hardly make it out. Anyway, this Miss Harding wrote a biography about Maximilian and Carlota of Mexico, called *Phantom Crown*."

"Mexico?" Camille felt her heart lose a beat at the mention of that land. How often during the past years of hunger and privation had she thought of her friend Sári, who must be somewhere south of the Rio Grande, happy and blessed with good fortune. Had Sári known of the trouble that dogged Camille's steps she would assuredly have helped with open hand. But pride is greatest in humiliation. Rather than make her circumstances known, Camille had broken off all correspondence, leaving no address by which she might be traced.

"The author's own story sounds as exciting as the book," Emma Novak was saying. "It seems she came to Mexico as a small girl, with her mother and father who were engaged there in a diplomatic mission for the Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria."

This proved too great a coincidence. Camille could contain herself no longer. "What sort of mission?" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Did it concern jewels, crown jewels—?"

Mother and daughter nodded, a trifle puzzled. Had Madame de Vernet heard the program after all?

Oh, no, Camille had no radio. "But I always read Mr. Jackson's column in the *Chronicle*," she said hastily, wondering the while how long it would be before a San Francisco paper turned up under some bench at the San Diego depot. "What was that name again? Of this author, I mean—"

The ladies swore it had been Harding.

At this, Camille's exultation suddenly subsided. Impossible! Something was wrong. . . . An impostor was obviously borrowing Sári's romanesque adventure and passing it off as her own. Very clever, too. For a moment she, Camille, had almost been taken in by the trick, believing this brazen story-teller to be her own godchild. But the name—Harding—was all wrong, stamping the whole thing as a fable. There were no Hardings on the Danube.

She went home somewhat disgruntled, intent to write

the young man who was literary editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle* a letter that would give him a piece of her mind. (He must be a very young man to make such a mistake.) Things like this gave the press a bad reputation for inaccuracy and prevarication. It was not to be wondered at that some people refused altogether to read a newspaper; for two cents Camille might never read one again herself, she was that wrought up.

On her way home she stopped to pluck a few leaves of mint, which she washed carefully under the kitchen tap. Next she brewed Anthony a cup of tea, bruising the fresh leaves with a spoon so as to release more flavor. She also unwrapped a morsel of coffee cake contributed by Mrs. Novak. And now, while Anthony swallowed his supper in slow gulps, she told him the story that had come over the radio.

"A scandal, is it not?" she finished in high dudgeon.

Anthony pondered the matter for some time. "I don't know," he said at last. "It could be true—one must not judge without trial, my dear, not without trial."

His words gave her a start, for in them she suddenly recognized and recaptured the Anthony of former years, the scientist to whom nothing was impossible, nothing too daring for belief. Though broken health had left him but a shadow of his earlier self, there still lurked in him somewhere the eternal sense of quest. It now broke through the wall of his languor and inertia.

"You must write a letter," he added thoughtfully, "but not an angry one."

"Yes, Toni—"

The gentleness of his manner imparted itself to her. She lay awake that night, thinking about the words she would employ, as she made up her mind to follow his suggestion. Before dawn she was up again, searching for pen and paper.

She wrote not one letter but two. The first was addressed to the literary editor of the San Francisco *Chronicle*, requesting that he transmit the second (inclosed in a sealed, stamped envelope) to the unknown author of *Phantom Crown*.

Joseph Henry Jackson obliged by performing this small task. It was thus that Camille's inquiry fluttered across the continent in the wake of a busy lecturer on a coast-to-coast tour. In New York at last the letter caught up with its quarry.

It was read, at first with amused curiosity, then with a deep and disturbed excitement. Between the scribbled lines there arose before the reader's eyes a faraway vision of childhood on the Danube, in a Magyar world, where there had been talk of a lovely godmother named Camille Fehér de Vernet. Presently memory expanded, evoking a happy scene around the tea table of this godmother's Berlin home, where there had been an abundance of cake, strawberries, whipped cream and conversation concerning

an imminent visit to Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna for the purpose of returning some jewels to His Majesty, the Emperor. . . .

At this point in her reflections, Bertita Harding rushed to her desk. "My beloved Aunt Camillushka," she wrote, "I am not the impostor you suspect, but your own god-child, the daughter of your girlhood friend Sári. I am married to a man named Harding." She said little more, wanting at first merely to establish contact; other missives, filled with detailed family chatter, would follow in due order. The present letter closed with the information that Sári had died in Mexico City and lay buried in the ancient Panteón Dolores on the edge of Chapultepec Forest, within the shadow of Maximilian's castle. "Please tell me everything about yourself and your affairs," urged a searching postscript; "remember, I have an Hungarian heart."

For Camille and Anthony this message brought tears of sorrow and joy. The disappearance of that radiant creature, Sári, they might long ago have guessed; were she alive they would somehow have known it. . . . On the other hand, Camille's godchild had grown up and she was here in the United States, perhaps within reach when her travels led westward again. It was a link with reality, forming a bridge between past and future, establishing the continuity of life. A deep, maternal feeling welled up in Camille's heart as she clutched the letter to her breast

and wandered through her desolate shanty with a new radiance in her eyes. They were not alone in the world. "Write me of your own affairs," her godchild had written; "remember, I have an Hungarian heart."

She pondered this exhortation. Ought she to tell the dismal story of the past dozen years, with all their bitterness, failure and humiliation? Could she reveal that they were shipwrecked, engulfed by deepest misery? She trembled at the thought of throwing such a blight on this new-found happiness. After all, the love that once had tied her to Sári was a deep and weathered emotion, whereas the bond between Camille and this unknown godchild, whom she remembered only as a small blonde sprite with a baffling Spanish vocabulary, was fragile as spun silk. It would not do to subject its gossamer filaments to so severe a test.

Instead of laying bare the truth of her dreary life, Camille sent a reply filled with gladness and rejoicing. She conveyed her own and Anthony's gratitude at the re-establishment of contact between the two families whose paths had led so far apart. Of their personal existence she spoke with deceptive zest: California was beautiful, she reported. Its incomparable climate had long ago lured them westward from the harshly inclement East. They were living in the country—on a ranch, as a matter of fact—where Anthony had plenty of time to develop his scientific ideas. Just now the great San Diego "Pacific Internal

Exposition" was under way, bringing many visitors to the Coast. It was all quite splendid.

Perhaps in her zeal to strike a cheerful note she overdrew the bow. Something between the lines and behind her glowing superlatives did not sound entirely convincing. "My lady doth protest too much," might have gone through the mind of anyone who read those optimistic paragraphs, so studded with glitter and hyperbole.

Something of this sort beset Camille's godchild now. Through some inexplicable sixth sense she grasped that all was not well with these two aging creatures who made so violent a to-do about their well-being. Anthony's celebrated scientific discoveries, of which there had always been much talk in the family circle, not only in Budapest but in Mexico City as well—why had they never made their mark in the world? Why had Anthony László remained obscure, unknown, sitting on some California "ranch" where he was brooding on further experiments of cosmic importance? The only member of that notable Polish house enjoying high renown was Philip de László, cousin of Anthony's father and famous portraitist of royalty, who had been knighted in London. . . . As for Camille and her great gifts which in the past had proved themselves no vague delusion, why had she not soared onward to the peak? If Anthony's destiny had been a matter of conjecture, this could not be said of his sister, for Camille's worth had been established through a long chain

of artistic triumphs. What, then, had happened to blot out the glory that had once adorned her name?

In obedience to an inner prompting the peripatetic author, having concluded her cross-country tour, retraced her steps and headed for the West. She must see with her own eyes what was left of Sári's world and of the associations that belonged to Sári's youth.

It was life coming full cycle.

Chapter 30

THE PAST ARISES

THE anticipated reunion did not take place in San Diego, because of an unexpected twist of circumstance.

Even while Camille had been in correspondence with Joseph Henry Jackson, an extraordinary measure—the payment of the soldiers' bonus—wrought a sweeping change in many homes throughout the country. Their own, miraculously, was included. Almost overnight, a buyer appeared for the house.

He was a World War veteran, who had just collected his portion of the meed paid out by Washington to more than a million men. Hearing of the mortgaged Bancroft property, and having long nursed an urge to become a landholder himself, the ex-soldier made a cash offer with the stipulation that on the instant of closing the sale the present owners stage a "walk-out."

Camille had never heard of a "walk-out," but she soon learned its meaning. She and Anthony were to leave behind all their possessions, with the exception of clothes, private documents and personal keepsakes. In return they would be freed by one swift stroke of all their worries and debts, with the added bliss of finding legal tender in their pockets.

It was too good to be true! Without hesitation brother and sister accepted the offer and agreed to obey its terms. They packed a few suitcases and crates, carefully picking only such household goods as the new owner was willing to relinquish. Then, while the veteran's family moved in, Camille and Anthony mounted a bus for San Francisco, their travel purse bulging with six hundred dollars in cash.

Their choice of destination was governed by Camille's onetime contact with the mercury dispensing firm, where she now hoped to gain re-employment. Her most pressing thought was to obtain medical treatment for Anthony; to this end they must be lodged in respectable quarters, where a physician would be able to attend the sick man.

The search for a lodging house ended in Oakland, where rents were lower and there were no hills to climb. Carefully considering her budget, Camille took two rooms in a small frame building on Telegraph Avenue. Here she received news of the impending arrival from the East of her god-child.

This threw her into a mild panic, since she had hardly

leisure to unpack their few belongings before it was time to hurry to the station to meet the incoming train. Even so, she had managed to spend a full morning in feverish preparation, dusting and furbishing the apartment by means of a few dime-store touches. Voile curtains, polka-dotted in white and yellow, lent gaiety to the front room, and paper serviettes with a bright blue border lifted the kitchen from its mood of bleakness. Next, Anthony must be made to look, not like a wretched invalid, but a slightly wearied scholar taking his ease in the sun. For this purpose she set up a couch near the window, where the warm rays poured in and tinted his pale cheeks, while he reclined in the posture of a gentleman of leisure. This might keep the visitor from peering too closely beneath the surface and discovering the misery that dwelt under their roof. On a sunny summer day one could take one's ease in the parlor; *voilà!*

Lastly Camille looked to her own person. Though never endowed with domestic talents, she had always possessed a distinct sense of style. A few deft gatherings with a pin, a ribbon here, a jabot or a bit of ruching there, and the dullest of frocks could be transformed into a new creation. Similarly with hats: by borrowing a feather or a bow from one old bonnet and combining it with a length of veiling from another there resulted invariably a piece of headgear that refreshed the most jaded spirit. She had often tried the formula; it always worked.

At last she stood in the Oakland depot, her heart fluttering like a captive bird in a cramped cage. Her feelings were an even mixture of unbounded joy and utter terror, for the happiness with which she anticipated seeing her godchild (she was already transferring her affection for Sári to the stranger who was Sári's daughter) became clouded with dismay at the thought of being herself seen at so low an ebb.

Did she look her best? Her outfit consisted of a bargain-counter dress of printed rayon, trimmed with the fichu and sash of two ancient Budapest creations which through the passing years had undergone a progressive metamorphosis. The original lace, expensive and of high quality, was somewhat the worse for wear, yet it still lent distinction to the humblest factory garment. In thus salvaging the fragments and shreds of a past elegance Camille bolstered her self-respect and primed her ego. Even her hat bespoke courage. It was not a hat: it was a *cha-peau*! Stitched out of a remnant of Milan straw and bound by black grosgrain ribbon, it towered bravely above the small figure, like the plumed helmet of a guardsman. Under this gallant headpiece a dimpled Magyar face peered anxiously across the station platform, searching for another face that might be the image of Sári.

On first sighting her godchild, Camille was taken aback. Here was a blonde creature with green eyes, whereas Sári had been as dark as the Tartar night. But

the features were the same—as were the hands, the feet, and every gesture.

“Aunt Camille—” said a voice that likewise had a familiar timbre.

“My little one! My little one!”

There were tears and embraces, while other travelers, porters and cab drivers surged round about.

“My child!” Camille repeated, as though unable to believe her eyes. “So you have come to your old god-mother—” Her plumed hat bobbed merrily up and down with excitement, while her feet, though plagued with fallen arches, executed a veritable jig.

Outside the station there was a moment of embarrassment as Camille indicated the limitations of her residence. The problem of overnight accommodations was plainly on her mind.

“Let’s take a taxi to my hotel,” the visitor suggested quickly; “I have reserved a room.”

This cleared the atmosphere. The ladies drove to a pleasant hostelry where both enjoyed a refreshing luncheon before setting out for the small flat on Telegraph Avenue.

For the second time in one day Camille found herself traveling in a hired automobile. The journey was a regal progress. She relaxed in queenly style against the patent-leather cushions, while her eyes rested happily on the round Hungarian cheeks of her godchild.

"Such red apple cheeks!" she cried over and over. Accustomed to Anthony's ghostly pallor, she stared with unabashed wonder at the face of health. In her enthusiasm she burst into the beloved Magyar song:

"There's only one small girl
In this whole world for me . . ."

They both knew the words and sang them loudly, their eyes shining with a mixture of sadness and joy. It was thus that the driver deposited them at the doorstep of the gray frame house.

"Anthony! Anthony!" exclaimed Camille as she ran up the narrow stairs and burst into the living room. "Look who is here—"

The white, still figure on the couch moved forward on the pillows. With eyes that had been almost blinded by years of overwork, Anthony scanned the visitor's face. Then the pale lips parted in a smile of recognition.

"Sári's child," he muttered, "it is Sári's daughter. . . ."

Camille bubbled with excitement. "She has come to see us, and she speaks Hungarian too—"

But this was a gross overstatement since, to retain a language so difficult, one must have constant practice. The duet in the taxi had created a pardonably false impression.

And now it was Anthony's turn to startle his sister.

Even while the two ladies put aside their wraps his hand reached over to a near-by table where a sea of papers lay spread out. Above the pile rested a small drafting board which he now slipped across his knee as, with pencil in hand, he began to work on some sketches.

"What are you doing?" Camille inquired in complete bewilderment. She had not seen him touch a crayon, pen or compass in more than a year.

"I feel extremely well," he told her. "I must get on with my inventions."

With this he pointed to an elaborate drawing that looked like nothing so much as a combination Swiss movement, automobile, and printing press. Camille's experienced eye recognized the perfection of workmanship and the bold flawlessness of lines. Her face lighted up, as her heart gave a sudden leap.

"What is it, Toni?" she exclaimed.

"A gold extracting machine, to eliminate old-fashioned pan methods. The wheels allow it to be moved from mine to mine."

"And this?" She picked up another paper covered with notations. "What will it be?"

He looked up eagerly. "Oh—that's an everlasting flashlight which requires no battery and no replacement of bulbs at any time. I thought it would be helpful for hunting and exploring trips; also for life boats on steamers, and for use in the army."

The remainder of the afternoon went by in fascinating discussion of technical plans for at least half a dozen discoveries with which Anthony meant to startle the world. They were all cunningly thought out in answer to current human needs, yet each seemed to be cursed with some obstinate blain that must be removed before marketability was insured. Added to this, Anthony had no way of foreseeing that the nation was due to go off the gold standard, which would make his gold-extracting machine as obsolete as a morning-glory phonograph horn.

Altogether the visit went off happily. Summoning all their valor, Camille and Anthony had succeeded in concealing their true circumstances, as in pride and dignity they established contact with one whose past was intimately linked to theirs.

The next morning the hour of parting came and Camille jauntily escorted her godchild to the station.

"You may not have found Toni looking very well," she remarked with an attempt at nonchalance. "But it is nothing—only fatigue after the journey from San Diego. In another week he will be busy visiting his many customers!"

On this note they said good-by.

The streamliner was halfway across the continent before a postscript would be flashed by Western Union, stating that Anthony had died of heart failure that night. . . .

Chapter 31

FILM PREMIERE

FOR the first time since those far-off days of her Budapest glory Camille was once more alone. She began to live with herself.

The small apartment in Oakland where she set up house-keeping was easy to take care of. Too easy. It left her time to brood and to dwell on her sorrow. The years of rearing Anthony from infancy to young manhood, and of caring for him through the decades of his singularly helpless maturity, had been habit-forming. She did not know how to live without someone to live for.

Yet she did not want to go east, away from the scene of his final struggle, for in her heart she felt that Anthony still continued somehow to need her.

Of course, she was at last free to work, though her remaining years would never again be haunted by the fear

of hunger; provision had been made for that. But in order to occupy her time she made the rounds of every employment agency in Oakland, Berkeley and Burlingame, as well as more remote towns across the bay, offering her services as translator, dramatics teacher, companion or children's nurse. However, seventy years lay heavily on her shoulders and there was no room in a competitive world for one of such venerable age. She met with unvarying refusal.

Not to be daunted, she turned to other things. If she could not earn money there must be some duty to be performed without pay, there must be unhappy people somewhere who had need of help or perhaps of no more than companionship. Resolutely she reported at the State Institute for the Blind and offered to read aloud to all patients who were bedridden. Behold, they did not send her away! She was received with open arms and given an immediate assignment—to sit up with a homesick Lancashire woman who in her sightlessness saw only England and cried out for it in the impenetrable dark.

To vary this exhausting routine there were occasional visits to a school for fashion and design, where Camille sat cheerfully amid an assembly of young millinery students. Here her somewhat flamboyant taste in ornament was disciplined into modern lines, though she was able at all times to top a too stolid and sober note with her own touch of chic.

To practice what she learned, Camille not only renovated all her own garments and hats but those of her blind friends as well. Since they were unable to appreciate any visible improvement in their wardrobe, she explained:

"There are new buttons on your dress, Miss Conklin. And for your bonnet, Mrs. Deane, I will find just the right shade of ribbon and a bunch of cherries."

Inquiring hands moved knowingly over the materials, as if to verify her words. It was astonishing how they who could not see were still aware of shapes and textures.

The first winter after Anthony's loss went by with this labor of love. Absorbed by her interest in people, Camille had learned that there were tragedies incomparably greater than hers. This seemed to restore her buoyancy of spirit, preparing her for exciting news which came on the wings of spring. The book *Phantom Crown* was to be filmed by Warner Brothers under the title of *Juárez*, with Academy Award winners in the leading rôles: Paul Muni as the Mexican patriot (to whom the focus was being diverted, away from royalty), Bette Davis as Carlota, Claude Rains as Napoleon III, Brian Aherne as Maximilian. This meant Bertita Harding's return to the Coast, with a reunion in the offing.

From now on Camille had no peace. She bustled about every day, putting up curtains, cleaning house and remodeling her oft-remodeled wardrobe. On the day before the picture opened in San Francisco she treated herself to the

epitome of luxury—a professional manicure. To be sure, she almost failed to obtain it, because of a slight difficulty with the very superior damsels in charge of the beauty shop she had selected for her spree. These glazed and supercilious operatives were not accustomed to the type of quaint old lady who might have stepped from the pages of a *Godey* fashion book. They ignored Camille and left her standing coldly in the door. At last, since no one asked her what she wanted, she sat down at a little table that was crowded with bottles and other paraphernalia.

“D’you wanna manicure?” an incredulous female deigned finally to inquire.

“Yes, please,” Camille answered sweetly, “but you must not say it that way. You must pronounce it in French like this—*manicure!*” She gave the word a correct Gallic intonation.

The girl looked up, taken aback. From a near-by booth a hairdresser peered out approvingly. As in years gone by, the little foreign accent worked its charm.

“Gee,” said the haughty young woman, cracking through her shell, “you’re French, aintcha?”

Camille let that pass. All over the world it was a gracious passport to be thought Parisian. Could there be a more just reward for a nation that made a virtue of charm?

With a twinkle in her eye she dropped a few more pearls of wisdom until presently she had the entire personnel of

the shop dancing attendance about her small person. While one girl trimmed this interesting customer's nails and coated them with a ravishing polish, another combed out the sparse ringlets that peeped coyly from Camille's latest bit of self-created millinery. Two languid blondes suddenly outdid themselves brushing her coat and stitching up a dangling cuff of yellowed lace (they could not know that it had been a gift from the immortal Réjane). Lastly, the proprietress of the establishment plucked a gardenia from a crystal bowl and pinned it to Camille's fichu. Her triumph was complete.

Gleaming in her new splendor, she marched forth the next evening to attend the show. She met the great and near-great in the vast bay city, shaking hands with Gertrude Atherton, Albert Bender, Dr. Rappaport, Baroness Alice von Girssewald, all of whom took her to their hearts as part of the phantom drama.

She sat through the picture, transported into a world too long forgotten. The pageant of a noble Hapsburg prince, who had met shipwreck far from home, stirred in her heart and evoked the poignant comprehension of one who has known failure too. Yet in that imperial figure, so valiant to the end, an imperishable truth found its highest expression. The fate of Maximilian was proof, if proof were needed, that failure is not synonymous with disgrace.

That evening brought another parting. The one being

in whom Camille's life now was centered—her godchild—must leave again, after a brief and happy visit.

It may be that the antics of the beauty shop, no less than the deep satisfaction experienced at the film première, turned the old lady's head and caused her momentarily to want more attention. As the hour of separation neared, she was unable to muster her usual fortitude and bravado.

"I am so alone, my child," she wailed, "and now, after this joy, I shall be more alone than ever!"

"Yes, Camillushka, I know."

"You are all I have in the world—"

"I want to take you with me, but my life is unsettled and I am nowhere very long—you could never stand the pace!"

The old lady nodded and blew her nose. She arranged her hat at an angle that approximated rakishness, while her lips essayed a smile.

"Never mind," she cut short the conversation. "I'll get over it. I'll keep busy. There must be something for me to do, even if it's only a sampler on which I embroider my memories in cross-stitch—"

"Camillushka! Darling—"

"Yes, my child?"

"That's it! Your memories—write them for me, day by day, as far back as you can go—in Slovak, Hungarian, French, German. Never mind about syntax or even chronology; just put things down as they come into your head,

and I'll translate them for you later. Then we'll find a publisher—"

The old lady's eyes were wide with incredulity. "You mean, I—I should write a book, like you?"

"Of course! Think of all you've seen and the people you've known; why, you have witnessed one era dying and another being born. And, best of all, you've exchanged an old world for a new."

Camille paused.

Yes, she reflected, the pageant of her life encompassed an epoch and a transition from accepted values to others yet untried. In the shifting of scenes from an old security to the hazards of new mental frontiers, her example and Anthony's offered but one of a myriad illustrations in success and failure. A story of Americanization. He had met destruction in the process of transplanting his roots, while she came through, hardy and unscathed. She would stand up to the last, an entity, incapable of defeat.

But there were other and less subjective angles, which might make her recollections worth recapturing. What she remembered belonged now to history, even as Austria-Hungary itself belonged to history. Franz Joseph, like Queen Victoria of England, had stamped his name upon nearly a century of empire, and she, Camille, had been part of its golden age. Her memoirs, if indeed she penned them, might serve as one more thread in the tapestry which alone remains to tell of time.

She was alone again.

But this aloneness left no room for loneliness. Every waking hour and no small portion of her nightly dreams became filled now with the panorama of the years gone by. She felt young again as she reassembled the faded scenes of a lifetime.

Laboriously her pencil moved over the pages of a loose-leaf copybook in which Dobsina, Grandfather Hus, the Remenyik House and the Ruffinyi Cavern assumed reality once more. Similarly, Liszt, Duse, Bernhardt, Réjane, Lehár, Anatole France and many lesser lights of an unforgettable generation paraded again before her inner eye. With a single phrase or stroke of pen she gave them delineation, transferring the essence of memory to the printed page.

She wrote all the time, unmindful of meals, exercise, or the few social pursuits that nowadays occasionally came her way. Often the kindly Baroness von Girsewald called to take her to tea, but Camille fenced politely, searching for the feeblest of excuses so as to remain faithful to her task.

In the end her industry was rewarded. Less than two years after the idea had first been contemplated, her manuscript was done. She bound it in a folder of the nicest imitation leather and sent it posthaste to her godchild.

The latter was somewhat nonplussed. Frankly, the whole scheme of putting Camille to work had been in-

tended as a safety valve which would provide an outlet for her no longer marketable talents. Her vivid imagination, coupled with an inexhaustible plenitude of emotion, might find expression and solace. That a seventy-year-old mind would shrink from the sheer physical chore of writing, this had been a foregone conclusion. The manuscript, it could be easily assumed, would never really be finished. What of it? Let Camillushka write and dream—a dozen years if necessary. She would have something to do each morning, beside her few domestic putterings, now that there was no one to need her labors any more. It was something to get up for and to lay aside at night with satisfaction or a touch of artistic disquiet, both wholesome tonics for the heart. In short, let her scribblings pile up and take on the form of a book; in the end they would be put away, just as she herself would one day be put away with a myriad other mortals to sleep anonymously beside the world's unnamed.

This had been the hidden strategy, the unspoken plan. It had of course been dictated, not by a false sense of charitableness, but by a genuine recognition of filial duty and of second-generation love and regard. That the scheme had shot so far off its mark was but a tribute to Camille's indomitably youthful spirit and to her god-child's utter lack of psychological insight.

For the old lady had finished her book, and the tale she had put down was traced in her life's blood. Through it

pulsed direct experience and a suffering far deeper than the borrowed tragedies of royalty spun by her godchild's facile prose. The Vernet manuscript was a simple record of things that truly happened and that consequently baffled the artifice of the novelist's or the historian's pen. It lived because through every paragraph there breathed the sturdy soul that was Camille Fehér de Vernet. And the opening words, concerning the origin of the town of Dobšina in faraway Slovakia, were Anthony's own. . . .

Only two short years ago, words of grotesque condescension had been spoken.

"Write down your memories, Camille. Never mind about syntax or chronology—we can fix that. Just put things on paper as they come into your head; they'll be translated later. . . ."

They were.

But no amanuensis ever approached the double task of translation and transcription with greater humility or with a more poignant realization that the magic of the original text, etched in four living tongues, defied capture and would be forever lost. . . .

THE END

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